United Nations A/58/PV.11

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Thursday, 25 September 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Papadopoulos: I would like to extend to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We are indeed very happy to see a Minister from a fellow Commonwealth, and also an island State, presiding over the session. I am sure that your diplomatic skills, experience and grasp of the issues will harmoniously steer our work. I would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for the excellent record of his presidency.

This year my country is about to fulfil its most ambitious aspiration — joining the European Union. After having signed the accession treaty in April, we expect to become a full member, along with nine other acceding countries, on 1 May 2004. But already we are associated with the work of the Union and participate in all meetings and in the life of the new European family of the 25 members. Hence, Cyprus is represented by the statement of the Italian Presidency of the European Union and fully subscribes to its contents.

Unfortunately, the current session is taking place in a heavy and loaded atmosphere. The deadly attack against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad last month, as well as the most recent one of two days ago, continue to fill us with bitterness and indignation. We all share the feeling of great injustice and insult to the international community. Once again, I wish to express our deep condolences to the victims' families and our sympathy to those injured. At the same time, we should also convey the message that such actions will not deter us from the pursuit of the high ideals of the United Nations and its engagement in Iraq.

From Baghdad to Jakarta, from Russia to India, and back to the heinous attacks of 11 September two years ago, terrorist acts around the globe serve as a painful reminder that terrorism transcends borders and attacks universal values. Freedom, democracy, human rights and humanity itself have to be defended by the international community with persistence and determination. At the same time, we should be cautious and ensure that our actions are fully in line with the cherished values we want to uphold. As the threat is unfortunately far from over, a genuine global mobilization, under the aegis of the United Nations, is of the essence if this endeavour is to be successful.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

03-53133 (E)

Cyprus is playing its part fully in this concerted effort and is among the countries that have ratified all 12 of the international conventions pertaining to terrorism. Furthermore, it has recently ratified the United Nations Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel of 1994.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has become, and rightly so, a top priority in the world's agenda. The risk of acquisition of such weapons by terrorist groups highlights even more the gravity and the urgency of the issues to be addressed. In that respect, the United Nations has a truly instrumental role to play. The universalization of, and compliance with, multilateral treaties related to disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as verification mechanisms and internationally-coordinated export controls, are essential tools in our efforts. We have repeatedly expressed our genuine commitment to international norms in the field of disarmament. I am happy to report that Cyprus, earlier this year, ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Ottawa Convention.

The Government of Cyprus attaches great importance to the international effort against mine proliferation and the clearing of minefields. For this reason it has taken the initiative to clear all minefields laid in the buffer zone by the Cyprus National Guard immediately after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. In this regard, I would like to announce today my Government's decision and firm commitment: first, to unilaterally start within the next two months, in cooperation with the United Nations and with the financial support of the European Union, mine clearance in the buffer zone and, secondly, to unilaterally proceed with the destruction of an appreciable amount of stockpiled antipersonnel mines this year during the month of November. This is just a first step but, I believe, a major one in the implementation of our obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention).

This year again, the situation in the Middle East remains a source of major concern for the region and beyond. The Quartet's road map, with the overwhelming international support it enjoys, represents an historic opportunity that should not be missed. Unfortunately, in recent days, the international community has held its breath as blind and spiralling violence thwarts the efforts to place and maintain on a solid track this process which would lead to a settlement. The necessary political will should be demonstrated by both sides, at all levels, and be matched with persistent action on the ground, in the right direction.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our longstanding position for a just settlement, in accordance with international law, United Nations resolutions and the agreements reached between the parties, which will put an end to the occupation and realize the aspirations of the Palestinian people for the establishment of an independent state, side by side with Israel, in peace and security. Cyprus, a country of the region with traditionally close relations with both parties, stands ready to assist in every possible way.

The realization of the Charter's vision of a just, peaceful and prosperous world remains inextricably linked with the commitment to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in full conformity with their universal, indivisible and interdependent nature.

The Republic of Cyprus, still witnessing serious violations of human rights within its territory by foreign armed forces, places human rights at the very top of its agenda. While working hard for the promotion and protection of the human rights of all its citizens under the harsh circumstances imposed by the invasion and occupation of a significant part of its territory, Cyprus never loses sight of the universal dimension of human rights and remains active and resolutely watches over the protection of human rights throughout the world. It reaffirms its full support of the Secretary General's efforts to integrate human rights into the whole range of United Nations activities and reiterates its commitment to working closely with United Nations partners towards their universal implementation.

We still strive in Cyprus for establishing the fate of all those Cypriots, both Greek and Turkish, missing since the Turkish invasion of 1974. This is a major issue of a purely humanitarian character and we seek the support of the international community as a whole in order to put an end, at last, to the continuing ordeal of so many families. For this to happen, the cooperation and political will of the Republic of Turkey are absolutely necessary.

Furthermore, the rights of the few remaining enclaved persons in the occupied part of Cyprus

continue to be violated. The rights of the refugees are also still being denied, while our people face new faits accomplis by the occupation army, as in the case of the advance of the Turkish Army in the area of Strovilia. With the assistance of the international community we are, nevertheless, resolved to persevere in the implementation of international conventions and for the restoration of the human rights of all Cypriots.

In view of the new challenges that the United Nations is required to face, Cyprus strongly supports the Secretary General's United Nations objectives, which aim at adapting the internal structures and culture of the Organization to new expectations. It therefore welcomes the work done on strengthening the management and administration — as well as streamlining the budget — of the United Nations.

My country also attaches great importance to the improvement of the intergovernmental structure and processes of the United Nations and the revitalization of the General Assembly as essential elements of the reform process, whose aim is to bring about a stronger United Nations system that will be able to effectively pursue the priorities adopted in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

We certainly need effectiveness but we cannot separate it from legitimacy. In Cyprus, we know, from our own experience, both the importance of legitimacy and the need for effectiveness. We have been facing the catastrophic results of aggression and we have been struggling for more than 29 years for the solution of the problem created by the invasion and occupation of the northern part of our country by Turkey.

Despite all efforts, Turkish intransigence has not been curbed and their defiance of numerous resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council continues unabated. Such an attitude constitutes not only unacceptable behaviour in international relations but is also completely anachronistic and incomprehensible to any rational thought. Furthermore it is at variance with the will and the wish of the overwhelming majority of Turkish Cypriots themselves who are persistently asking for a solution and for participation in the accession of Cyprus to the European Union. We continue, as far as we are concerned, to do our best to bring them on board and we have embarked on an ambitious policy in order to enhance their standard of living and allow them to fully enjoy the rights and benefits that they are entitled to as Cypriots.

In Cyprus, we have faced adversity for so many years and we have survived. Hence, we know that we have to persevere. We still believe in the United Nations and we are grateful for its interest and involvement. I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts within the framework of his mission of good offices in Cyprus, entrusted to him by the Security Council. I would like also to praise the work of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Mr. Álvaro de Soto, and all members of his team, of his assistant of the United Nations Mission, as well as of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and of the contributing countries. I believe that it is appropriate to mention this here at this stage because, as you all know, the continuing and longstanding Turkish intransigence thwarted a few months ago what was probably the strongest initiative ever of the United Nations for finding a solution in Cyprus.

We understand and share the bitterness and the disappointment of all involved regarding this failure but, as I said before, we should not give up. We have always counted on United Nations support and involvement and we will continue to do so. We are always ready, whenever the Secretary-General invites us, to engage in serious negotiations on the basis of his plan in order to reach a settlement as soon as possible, in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions. We hope that it will soon be possible for the other side to realize that they have to return to the negotiating table, to cooperate constructively with the Secretary-General and to demonstrate the necessary political will to yield a settlement.

A solution is urgently needed in Cyprus, a functional and viable solution that will embrace all Cypriots and will allow our country to take its stride and fully assume its place and role within the European family. A united Cyprus in a united Europe will thrive and progress with its partners towards a secure and prosperous future, working hand in hand with all other members of the international community for the promotion of universal values and peace.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Vladimir V. Putin, President of the Russian Federation

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Putin (*spoke in Russian*): Once again, I am delighted to have this opportunity to address this representative audience. At the outset, however, I should like to wish the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly fruitful work — work to successfully harmonize the actions of peoples and States; work on behalf of peace, security and progress.

Those purposes were set out in the Charter of the United Nations by our predecessors, but, as we can see, they are still relevant. Even now, they provide a solid, long-term foundation for the activities of the United Nations. And, although the structure and the functions of the Organization took shape in an international environment fundamentally different from ours, time has only reaffirmed their universal importance. Today, the instruments of the United Nations are not merely in demand; they are, as life itself has shown, simply irreplaceable in crucial situations.

That has been made abundantly clear by the following important fact: despite sharp differences concerning how to resolve the Iraq crisis, the situation is ultimately returning to the legal sphere of the United Nations. Russia's position in that regard is consistent and clear. Only direct United Nations participation in Iraq's reconstruction will enable Iraq's people to decide their future. And only with active and — I want to stress this — practical United Nations assistance in Iraq's economic and civil transformation will Iraq assume a truly new and worthy place in the world community.

It is clear that, in recent years, the United Nations has increasingly been obliged to carry out fundamentally new tasks and to tackle threats that are different from, but just as serious as, those it faced before. Three years ago, at the 2000 Millennium Summit, I said here that the common enemy of the United Nations was terrorism. Was Russia's voice heeded then? Did everyone understand the seriousness of the threat, and were our joint actions adequate? The events of 11 September proved that, unfortunately, they were not.

To us in Russia, however, the style of the murderers who committed terrorist acts in Moscow, in Chechnya and elsewhere in Russia and in New York, as well as against United Nations staff in Baghdad, has long been painfully familiar. That style is identical everywhere, and the fact that the inciters of terror are easily recognizable — with regard to both the events of August this year and the terrorist attacks of previous years — only attests to the global nature of this threat.

It is true that now we are listening to one another. And we understand that the United Nations must become — and is indeed becoming — the basis for a global anti-terrorist coalition. Here, I wish to take particular note of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee. Terrorism is a challenge to the planet's security and to its economic future. Therefore, the Committee must become a real and practical instrument for effectively fighting the terrorist threat.

I should like to focus in particular on the humanitarian activities of the United Nations. That area consumes the lion's share of the Organization's energy, time and resources, but it does not always appear in the headlines, nor is it always familiar to the citizens of the more prosperous States. But it is precisely that area of United Nations work that is so fundamental and irreplaceable. The United Nations is helping millions of destitute people throughout the world — victims of hunger, of disease and of conflict — to survive and not to lose hope. That work is exceptionally important; it lends indisputable political and moral authority to the entire Organization. And it is here that the interrelationship between the moral and political content of international activities is particularly evident.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all staff members of the United Nations, all non-governmental organizations and, of course, the many volunteers who are participating in this noble work. Because we understand how valuable the Organization's humanitarian mission is, Russia views it as a major political endeavour. We are already contributing to this work, and we are committed to increasing our contribution. Over the past three years, Russia has forgiven a total of $27.2 billion in debt of

developing countries, and we are currently granting significant tariff preferences to such countries.

For the first time in many years, as our country has grown, it has become a donor to the United Nations World Food Programme. The horrors of starvation are well known to us from our own history. As a result of the civil war of the past century and the forced collectivization of the 1920s and 1930s, millions of people died of starvation in the Volga region, in Northern Caucasus and in other parts of our country. Hunger became a national tragedy for the peoples of Ukraine as well. We consider it our moral and ethical duty to expand our participation in food aid programmes.

Russia intends to work actively to resolve acute environmental problems. A milestone will be achieved in that area by the World Conference on Climate Change, scheduled to convene next week in Russia's capital, Moscow. We also believe it is essential that a global system be established to monitor and neutralize dangerous infectious diseases, and we consider the work done by the Global Fund to be a real demonstration of international solidarity in fighting the spread of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Of course, the United Nations, like any system with a complex structure, needs to be improved. But the Organization's past and current problems have never been problems of only the Organization per se; they have always been created by — and they continue to reflect — contradictions in the very system of international relations, particularly the system of international law. After all, politicians, including those represented in the United Nations, including the Security Council, do not always have at their disposal adequate and effectively functioning legal instruments — instruments that would enable them to deal effectively with the international and regional crises that arise. International law must, of course, be fluid and living, reflecting the realities of the contemporary world. I believe that many of the processes that are under way within the United Nations also attest to the constant changes that are taking place in the world. Such changes dictate a logic of evolution in the United Nations.

Members of the Organization know very well that, as a rule, all of the achievements of the United Nations are shared successes, and that our failures are shared miscalculations. Such knowledge, however, brings with it great responsibility. First and foremost, we must be extremely careful about interfering with the fabric — the mechanisms — of the work of the United Nations. Clearly, behind any such decision there should be more than general political rhetoric — mere words about so-called fair policies.

I am convinced that any attempt to modernize United Nations instruments must be preceded by serious analysis and careful calculation. Such an approach should be taken, first and foremost, with regard to the principal international legal instruments. After all, guaranteeing that they remain effective is the only way to avoid a legal vacuum. As long as the norms of international law remain unchanged and operative, we must observe them. We must ensure continuity of security guarantees for States and for the world as a whole.

We must analyse United Nations structures and mechanisms and try to understand which have proved effective and productive, as well as which have done the job they were intended to do and which now remain unused. We should remember that much of the potential of the United Nations has still to be tapped. There are many resources that we are only now learning how to use.

I would like in particular to comment on the need to enhance the effectiveness of the Security Council. I am convinced that, given the deep-rooted nature of the current differences of opinion and the importance of ensuring that the Council remain effective, we must work gradually and very cautiously.

We believe that at this stage we should be guided above all by the broadest possible agreement on all aspects of the expansion of the Council, as well as by the need to ensure that it maintains its current high status and the legitimacy born of agreed actions. After all, the Security Council, as the Charter makes clear, acts on behalf of the United Nations. The Security Council is endowed with a specific mechanism for harmonizing political will and for protecting the national interests of a great variety of States, and, through this, the interests of the entire international community.

It is true that we often hear that the developed countries bear special responsibility for the destiny of the world. Such leadership, however, entails major obligations, primarily to ensure that the interests of the international community as a whole are reflected. Being a world Power means working together with the world community. Being a truly strong, influential

State means seeing and helping to resolve the problems of small and economically weak countries.

In that connection, I believe that it would be useful to intensify the work that is being carried out by the United Nations in cooperation with the regional international structures. That will lead directly towards increased economic prosperity in various parts of the world, and thus contribute to the containment of potential threats and the maintenance of a common global strategic balance.

We welcome the emergence of regional centres for coordination and cooperation in a united Europe. We favour the strengthening of integration processes in the Asia-Pacific region. And of course, we support the work of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as that of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, whose authority and effectiveness are continuing to grow.

Russia is not the only country that is interested in regional integration. Our CIS partners have also demonstrated their practical commitment to that same goal. This was reaffirmed during the recent CIS summit. We consider the development of our interaction with the European Union, which is multifaceted in nature, to be important. Likewise, with regard to security issues, we attach importance to the search new forms of cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

We should counter current threats to civilization only by means of collective responses whose legitimacy is not in doubt. In this respect, we need a systemic vision that combines political with, when necessary, military measures. Such measures should be agreed upon in advance, and be sensible and appropriate.

The need to improve the peacekeeping mechanisms of the United Nations remains on the Organization's agenda. The United Nations must be able to deploy peacekeeping — and, where necessary, peace-enforcement — operations more quickly and efficiently, in strict compliance with the United Nations Charter. I should like to note that Russia, which has always supported the peacekeeping functions of the Organization, is prepared to step up its participation in such operations, both under United Nations auspices and in coalition operations authorized by the Security Council.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems remains a serious challenge to the modern world. The most dangerous challenge is the possibility of their falling into the hands of terrorists. We know what steps must be taken in order to eliminate such threats. These include the further universalization of the existing non-proliferation regimes, the strengthening of international verification instruments and the introduction of safe technologies in nuclear energy production. In general, this requires the renunciation by States of excessive arsenals and military programmes that could undermine the political and military balance and trigger an arms race.

Russia believes that it is extremely important to prevent the militarization of outer space. We believe that a comprehensive agreement should be elaborated on this issue, and invite all countries possessing potential in this area to join our initiative. The Russian initiative to set up, under the auspices of the United Nations, a global system to counter these new threats has already been supported by the General Assembly. We propose the adoption of a new resolution during this session setting out specific further steps in this direction.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that the solid structure of the United Nations has enabled it to withstand all of the many crises of the second half of the twentieth century. It has helped to overcome threats of global confrontation and, most importantly, helped to promote human rights. It has also helped to assert the principles of mutual respect and good-neighbourliness among States. The main thrust of the United Nations approach is that humankind has no alternative but to jointly construct a safer, fairer and more prosperous world. That is our duty to succeeding generations. In that important task we can have no better help than such time-tested instruments as the work of the United Nations, an Organization that, for half a century, took decisions that were crucial for the entire world.

Russia is convinced that the United Nations must maintain its central role in international affairs. This is particularly relevant, and particularly important, for resolving conflict situations. This is our choice and our strategic position of principle.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Russian Federation for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kirchner (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the Assembly at this session. I would also like to congratulate the outgoing President, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his work at the head of this Assembly at the previous session.

On behalf of my Government, we would also like to reiterate our gratitude for the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to promote peace and multilateralism, and to express our solidarity in wake of the criminal attack that claimed the lives of several staff members of this Organization.

We have come from the world's South to the General Assembly with a firm belief that revitalizing this global representative forum is essential for international law to become once again a rational instrument for resolving conflicts and facing threats. Restoring the major political role that the Assembly played in the early days of the United Nations is key to strengthening security for all citizens of the world.

Indeed, multilateralism is the cornerstone of this Organization. But the cold war and bipolarity that characterized the world after the Yalta Conference until the fall of the Berlin Wall undoubtedly shaped the instruments and legislation that were adopted within that framework.

Any objective look at the international situation that that goes beyond the particular biases of individual Members of the Organization will reveal another hallmark of the world today: the technological, military and economic supremacy of one country over all the rest. We therefore consider it necessary to reaffirm our determined support for the purposes and principles that underpin the United Nations, so that it can actively work to promote peace and the social and economic development of humanity.

But, it bears repeating, we must not limit our commitment to multilateralism to words alone. Promoting multilateralism requires a dual strategy. First, an open mind is needed to objectively grasp the full extent of the new state of affairs. Secondly, we need to reconsider the instruments and rules so to cope with this new reality just as was done during the era of bipolar politics in order to save the world from destruction. Multilateralism and security are inseparable but are not the only factors in this new equation.

The world is changing against the backdrop of a globalization that is creating unprecedented opportunities and risks. The greatest risk is the widening gap between the rich and poor. To divide the world into central and marginal countries is not merely an academic exercise or a matter of ideology. Quite the contrary, such definitions reflect a grim reality of unprecedented poverty and social exclusion. Our priority must be to ensure that globalization works for all, and not just for the few. Promoting the development of the marginalized countries is no longer simply a matter of social conscience on the part of the central countries. It has an impact on their situation and security. Hunger, illiteracy, exclusion and ignorance are some of the basic elements that fuel the spread of international terrorism and cause violent and massive national migration flows, which have cultural, social and economic consequences. They also inevitably threaten the security of the central countries.

Economic integration and political multilateralism hold the key to safer future world. We need to build global institutions and effective partnerships within the framework of fair and open trade and to bolster support for the development of those most in need. If we are to promote collective security intelligently, we must understand that security is not just a military issue; it depends on political, economic, social and cultural factors as well. These are the key challenges on the current international agenda that the main actors must meet.

In this framework, the relations between countries like ours and others in the international

community are affected by a huge and crushing burden of debt owed to multilateral financial institutions and private creditors. We accept our share of responsibility for having adopted policies that caused this indebtedness. But we also call on the international financial institutions — which contributed to, encouraged and promoted the growth of that debt by dictating their terms — to accept their own share of responsibility. It goes without saying that when debt grows to such an extent, not only the debtor but also the creditor bears responsibility. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge the tangible, verifiable and rather obvious fact that repaying such a debt entails great hardships.

Without specific international assistance to enable indebted countries to restore economic solvency and thereby their ability to repay debts and without measures to foster their growth and their sustainable development by taking concrete steps to promote their market access and growth of exports, debt repayment remains a pipedream. Promoting exports of finished products based on the natural resources that most indebted countries have can lay the foundations for sustainable development, without which creditors will have to face their losses without any other realistic options.

No one is known to have succeeded in getting their money back from the dead. To reach the objective of making a country viable so it can pay its debts, intensified multilateral negotiations are greatly needed to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers that hinder access of our exports to the markets of the developed countries, which have the largest purchasing capacity. Indeed, there continue to be export and production subsidies in the international trade in food products — Argentina's main export item — as well as tariffs, unjustified sanitary measures and trade restrictions that distort the terms of trade in commodities and seriously hamper market access for finished products.

The failure of the World Trade Organization negotiations in Cancún should serve as a wake-up call to us in this regard and should be remedied by making the greatly sought-after link between business opportunities in international trade and the growth of indebted countries and their debt-repayment capacity. It is paradoxical and even ridiculous that we should be called upon to repay our debt while we are being prevented from trading and selling our products.

On the other hand, although it is true that the objectives of the multilateral institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), include shortening the duration and lessening the imbalance of payments of member countries and instilling confidence by giving them opportunities for readjustment, without taking measures that undermine national or international prosperity, it is also necessary to redesign those multilateral institutions. Redesigning multilateral lending agencies should include changing the models so that the success or failure of economic policies is measured in terms of success or failure in the fight for development, equitable distribution, the fight against poverty and maintaining adequate levels of employment.

This new millennium should banish adjustment models in which the prosperity of some is based on the poverty of others. The dawn of the twenty-first century should mean the end of an age and the beginning of a new collaboration among creditors and debtors.

In a nutshell, it is essential to take note of the close connection that exists between security, multilateralism and economics.

The defence of human rights occupies a central place in the new agenda of the Argentine Republic. We are the children of the mothers and grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, and we therefore insist on permanently supporting the strengthening of the system for the protection of human rights and the trial and conviction of those who violate them. All of this is based on the overarching view that respect for persons and their dignity arises out of principles preceding the development of law, whose origins can be traced to the beginnings of human history. Respecting diversity and pluralism and relentlessly fighting impunity have been unwavering principles of our country ever since the tragedy of recent decades.

We strongly advocate a peaceful settlement of international disputes, particularly in a matter as dear to our feelings and interests as our sovereignty dispute with regard to the Malvinas, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The United Nations has recognized that this is a colonial situation maintained by the United Kingdom and that it must be settled through bilateral negotiations between the Argentine Republic and the

United Kingdom. We value the role of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization and express our fullest willingness to negotiate in order to conclusively settle this longstanding dispute, a steady objective of the Argentina Republic. We urge the United Kingdom to agree to resume bilateral negotiations to resolve this major issue.

Also with reference to the Southern regions, we undertake to protect the interests of the international community in Antarctica, ensuring that the activities carried out there are consistent with the Antarctic Treaty and its 1991 Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection. We shall take steps at the relevant forums for the installation of the authorities and the operation of the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat at its designated seat, Buenos Aires.

We express our support and wish for a stable and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an independent and viable State, while at the same time recognizing the right of Israel to live at peace with its neighbours within safe and internationally recognized borders.

We have spoken of progress and collective security as the global challenges of today. We have highlighted the close link that exists between economic problems and security. We firmly condemn all terrorist actions. We know what we are talking about. In 1992 and 1994 we suffered, first hand, our own Twin Towers. The attacks on the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA Jewish Community Center took the lives of over 100 of our compatriots. We can bear witness to the need to fight effectively against the new threats posed by international terrorism.

The vulnerability of all countries in the international community to this scourge can be reduced only through intelligent, concerted and multilateral action sustained over time. The fight against terrorism requires a new rationality. We face an enemy whose logic is to trigger reactions symmetrical to its actions. The worse, the better, is the favoured scenario, and that logic partly accounts for the increasingly spectacular — almost cinematographic — nature of its operations. Legitimate responses and the support of international public opinion are both fundamental to confronting those new forms of violence.

This view places the problem of international terrorism in a dimension that goes beyond a unilateral or military solution. On the contrary, merely responding through the use of force, however impressive such force may be or appear to be, in many cases ends with the perpetrators being presented as victims. This closes in a perfect circle the perverse logic to which we have been referring.

As we see, in view of the complexity of the situation, it is no longer useful to take shelter in old alignments, anachronistic ways of thinking or outdated structures. The new challenges call for different and creative solutions so as not to be left behind by changes in the world in the technological, economic, social and undoubtedly even cultural fields.

Let us rise to the challenge of thinking anew for a new world. To combine different ideas and create practical means to put them into practice in the service of the people we represent is our duty.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mahathir (Malaysia): Sir, may I, as Prime Minister of Malaysia and Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, offer my sincere congratulations to the President on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I am confident that given his wisdom, experience and diplomatic skill, he will be able to steer the proceedings of this session to a successful conclusion. I wish to assure him of the

fullest cooperation of the Malaysian delegation. I strongly believe that the members of the Non-Aligned Movement would similarly render their full support and cooperation to him.

Allow me also to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, for his dedication and the effective manner in which he conducted the work of the fifty-seventh session. I also commend the Secretary-General for his efforts and perseverance, and I salute the men and women who had dedicated and given their lives in the service of the United Nations.

The General Assembly has been conceived as a forum for the nations of the world, big and small, to air their views and grievances freely, as the stakeholders in the governance of the international community. Unfortunately, it is subservient to the Security Council, which in turn is subservient to any single one of the five victors of a war fought more than half a century ago. It is hardly a democratic forum, but it is all that the great civilization of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has — a civilization that is supposed to uphold freedom.

The President returned to the Chair.

Still we, the small nations, have much to be grateful for. From being the colonies of the Europeans, we are now independent and we are granted membership of the United Nations with the right to speak, albeit with proper restraint and decorum, in this Assembly. As independent nations, we believe that we have a right to manage our internal affairs ourselves without foreign interference.

We admit that there are abuses in the management of our countries by some of our Governments, but our detractors should remember that they, too, abused their Governments' power when they seized land belonging to indigenous peoples and exterminated them, claiming that it was their "manifest destiny", the "white man's burden", to bring civilization by setting up their own countries in these lands and confining the indigenous peoples to barren reserves, with no role in the Government of the new nations. What they did to the indigenous peoples is not out of character, for in their own countries they carried out pogroms against the Jews, inquisitions and mock trials, torture and killing by burning at the stake.

We all carry the baggage of history, but we would willingly leave it behind were it not for the fact that history has a nasty habit of repeating itself. Today, we are seeing the resurgence of European imperialism. At first, we thought that the colonization would be virtual. Merely by economic strangulation and financial emasculation, the newly independent countries could be brought to their knees, begging to be recolonized in other forms. Today, however, we are actually facing the old physical occupation by foreign forces. Puppet regimes are installed, dancing as puppets do.

This institution, the United Nations, in which we had pinned so much hope, despite the safeguards supposed to be provided by the permanent five, is today collapsing on its clay feet, helpless to protect the weak and the poor. This United Nations can just be ignored, pushed aside, gesticulating feebly as it struggles to be relevant. Its organs have been cut out, dissected and reshaped so that they may perform the way the puppetmasters want. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization have now been turned into instruments of hegemony to impoverish the poor and enrich the rich. It is not surprising that today the disparities between rich and poor are far greater than ever.

With an impotent United Nations and its agencies turned into national organs of the powerful, the small nations are now naked and hapless. Even if we are totally innocent, there is nothing to prevent trumped-up charges being brought against us.

We feel a great need for the integrity and credibility of the United Nations to be restored. Fortunately, the breach of international norms has been by countries which are reputedly tolerant of free speech and the rights of others. When criticisms are forbidden, the abuses will increase until they become intolerable and revolt takes place, with all the destruction that accompanies it. That was what happened with Saddam Hussein on a national scale. That can also happen on an international scale. Free speech provides the safety valve, the absence of which must eventually lead to an explosion.

Since the Asian financial crisis in 1997, Malaysia has not been able to recover fully. This crisis was followed by the collapse of the dot.com companies and the massive cheating by the huge multinational corporations of the rich. Then came the 11 September 2001 attack by terrorists, which precipitated an unprecedented tightening of security worldwide and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The world now lives

in fear — the rich of terror attacks and the others of being made targets of suspicion and pre-emptive aggression.

Then came severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which almost bankrupted many airlines and the tour and travel business. SARS disappeared almost as quickly as it appeared, but there is no guarantee that it or similar new infectious diseases will not come back.

The world has lost its way. The hopes of the post-Second-World-War period and the United Nations were dashed by the cold war. The cold war is over now, but the resultant unipolar world and the ascendancy of capitalism have brought about new threats. No country is safe from marauding currency traders who, in a few short days, can demolish the patiently nurtured economies of the developing world. Far from being curbed, these highway brigands are lauded for their philanthropy. Robin Hood at least stole from the rich to give to the poor. These highwaymen steal from the poor and give a paltry sum to assuage their sense of guilt. They are no philanthropists.

The unipolar world dominated by a democratic nation is leading the world into economic chaos, political anarchy, uncertainty and fear. We are not going to recover or have peace so long as threats are used for political and economic reforms that most of the world is not ready for or willing to accept.

If we want to have democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, the powerful must demonstrate their commitment to all these noble ideas. And they can begin by restructuring the United Nations, in particular by abolishing the undemocratic single-country veto. This should be replaced with a modified veto whereby two veto powers, backed by three other members of the Security Council, would be needed to block any United Nations resolution. Even that, however, should be gradually dismantled in favour of majority decisions in the Security Council.

The other important agencies of the United Nations must be freed from the domination of any single country. Gradually, they should be made more democratic.

The free market must be recognized for what it is — a market in which the bottom line is paramount. It is not a political force for the disciplining of Governments. For the right to exploit world trade, a tax should be levied by the United Nations and used by the United Nations to build needed infrastructure for the poor countries of the world. Exchange rates should be fixed by an international commission based on relevant issues. Apart from a small commission, no profits may be made by speculating or manipulating exchange rates. Subsidies by rich countries for the production of food and other products must be forbidden, although poor countries should be allowed for a stipulated time to protect their industries and food production.

The world has lost its way. The world is moving too fast. We need to pause to take stock of things. There is a Malaysian saying that when one loses his way he should go back to the beginning. We need to go back to the beginning. If we dare to admit it, many of the problems that we face today are due to the arbitrary expropriation of the land of the Palestinians in order to create the State of Israel in order to solve the European Jewish problem.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Patrick Leclercq, Minister of State, Chief of the Government and Director of External Relations of the Principality of Monaco

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister of State, Chief of the Government and Director of External Relations of the Principality of Monaco.

Mr. Patrick Leclercq, Minister of State, Chief of the Government and Director of External Relations of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Minister of State, Chief of the Government and Director of External Relations of the Principality of Monaco, Mr. Patrick Leclercq, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Leclercq (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Your election is welcome testimony of the equal sovereignty of States, a principle to which the delegation of the Principality of Monaco attaches particular importance. I assure you and the members of

the Bureau of our support for your high mission at the service of the international community.

I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General: all are aware of his tireless efforts to promote with courage and lucidity the ideals our Organization embodies as it faces the challenges of our time. The tragic circumstances surrounding the heinous attack perpetrated in Baghdad last month call for us to pay special tribute to all United Nations personnel and salute with respect and sorrow the memory of those, including Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and his companions, who by sacrificing their lives, have demonstrated the strength and grandeur of commitment to the values that only our Organization can legitimately embody.

When it joined the United Nations ten years ago, the Principality of Monaco pledged to fully abide by the obligations incumbent on all Member States and to participate, according to our means, in the promotion of the values that bring us together. We are all the more attached to that commitment because it is particularly important for small States such as Monaco that all are bound by the same rules in their international conduct and that all enjoy equal dignity and the equal right to respect.

Of course, there is a considerable and at times glaring divergence between the ambitions we collectively espouse and the actual situations we observe around us, which unfortunately afflict so many among us. Assuredly, it would be pointless to ignore the profound differences that may exist between States in terms of both their characteristics and their influence in international affairs. But it is essential that we have a place, a forum in which we are all compelled to judge our actions and conduct by the principles that are supposed to guide our actions and in which we are compelled to examine our conscience — in short, a place where we, as members of the international community, are held accountable to the collective demands of that community.

That is why it is so important that we strive to make the Organization more effective so that respect for our principles and purposes prevails over the seeming ease of self-justification and so that a collective approach based on dialogue prevails over unilateral action. As a question of principle and as a result of reasoning, the Principality of Monaco therefore supports all initiatives aimed at strengthening our collective mechanisms, in particular those undertaken by the Secretary-General pursuant to the Millennium Declaration as presented at the opening of the present session.

Accordingly, the Principality of Monaco attaches particular importance to the effective implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the follow-up to outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. Indeed, what purpose would be served by these enormous gatherings in which all participants vie to demonstrate their magnanimity and generosity if the resulting commitments are not followed up on or lack the means to monitor their implementation? The authority of the United Nations and the confidence placed in it would be diminished, even as the Organization has considerably expanded the range of its activities in order to effectively tackle the problems of our time, acting from the global perspective of its own ongoing responsibility to ensure peace, security and development. Would civil society, which today is present in all the debates that involve it, not feel frustrated and seek to take the lead on its own terms, creating an environment of confrontation?

While participating in the many activities pursued within the Organization, a small country such as the Principality of Monaco must reasonably assess the size of the contribution it is able to make to the action of the international community. Thus, we have focused our efforts in the areas of sustainable development and humanitarian action because we feel that our acquired experience enables us, despite our human and material limitations, to make a useful contribution since we can count on very dynamic Monegasque non-governmental organizations, which benefit from particularly generous local support. I am happy to convey our appreciation to those organizations.

Monaco's priority areas are education, health, the protection of children, development assistance and environmental protection. Its activities have resulted in numerous achievements in the field, particularly in Africa, where our aid has doubled following the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Monaco has also achieved much in the Mediterranean region. All Monaco's initiatives are complemented by our active participation in the forums where those various situations are addressed.

The Principality of Monaco focuses on concrete projects such as schools, occupational training centres,

healthcare centres, investments in local communities to promote economic activity in village communities through micro-credit programmes. All those projects are aimed at directly improving the living conditions of their beneficiaries.

In the area of the environment, in which the Principality has long distinguished itself, especially in the protection of the marine environment since one of Monaco's sovereigns, Prince Albert I, helped found the study of oceanography in the late nineteenth century. Our experience has led to us being chosen to participate in the next Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. The Principality of Monaco has also been the source of many initiatives related both to protecting its immediate environment, the Mediterranean Sea, and to monitoring pollution and preserving biodiversity elsewhere, with a long-term perspective of support for sustainable development.

Resolutely committed to participating in the efforts of the international community to rise to the most recent challenges with which it has been confronted, Monaco has ratified the twelve main international instruments relating to terrorism, putting into place appropriate administrative structures. Furthermore, it is the first State to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which will enter into force in the next few days, on 29 September. It is also preparing to host, next month, the Fifth International Summit on Transnational Crime, organized by the United Nations and the Council of Europe, which will bring together representatives of Governments and the private sector. In the same spirit, the Principality works with all the relevant institutions to fight drugs and human trafficking and the illegal financial flows they engender or sustain.

Need I also reaffirm the obvious commitment to peace and security of a country as sensitive to its environment as Monaco, even if, having no armed forces, it is unable to participate in collective actions under the flag of the United Nations? It is in the humanitarian field that Monaco consistently makes its contribution by assisting civilian populations, victims of combat and the upheavals and atrocities that too often today characterize armed conflicts, as can be seen particularly in Africa. In a symbolic solidarity, the Principality celebrates the International Day of Peace on 21 September and associates itself with the Olympic Truce, given Monaco's involvement in the Olympic movement as symbolized in the long-standing participation of Crown Prince Albert in the International Olympic Committee. We thus welcome the inclusion of a new item on the agenda of this session, entitled "International Year of Sport and Physical Education", whose goal is to highlight what has always been our motivation, the outstanding role of sport in developing relations between peoples by promoting mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue, factors that contribute to both peace and development.

As I conclude this statement, I hope I have succeeded in communicating the profound attachment of the Principality of Monaco to the world Organization that it joined 10 years ago at His Serene Highness Prince Rainier III's initiative. He was convinced that his country would thereby gain a most effective international profile, protection in an uncertain world and an opportunity to usefully demonstrate its solidarity. Since Monaco is naturally open to the outside world, it has easily found its place among you.

Our Principality is grateful for what the United Nations has given it and is striving in return and to the extent of its capacity to help the Organization achieve its objectives with the conviction that what the international community needs are reliable Member States. And reliability is not a question of size but of will. It is this will that inspires and guides us.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Minister of State, Chief of the Government and Director of External Relations of the Principality of Monaco for the statement he just made.

Mr. Patrick Leclercq, Minister of State, Chief of the Government and Director of External Relations of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of the Republic of India

The President: The Assembly will hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, and in inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Vajpayee (India) (*spoke in Hindi; English text provided by the delegation*): Mr. President, we congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly. We wish you every success in our shared endeavours. You will have our fullest cooperation in your efforts.

As we gather here, in the wake of the many momentous events over the past year, it is inevitable that we should ponder some fundamental questions about the role and relevance of the United Nations.

The United Nations was charged by its Charter "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." The Charter also speaks of our collective determination "to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security." There was an implicit conviction that the United Nations would be stronger than the sum of its constituent Member States. Its unique legitimacy flows from a universal perception that it pursues a larger purpose than the interests of one country or a small group of countries.

This vision of an enlightened multilateralism has not materialized. There have been difficulties and deficiencies in ensuring a world free from strife, a world without war. The United Nations has not always been successful in preventing conflicts or in resolving them.

During the past year, the United Nations encountered new challenges. We saw the extraordinary inability of the five permanent members of the Security Council to agree on action in respect of Iraq, in spite of complete agreement on basic objectives. Most recently, the brutal terrorist attack on the United Nations Office in Baghdad struck a body blow at the United Nations' humanitarian efforts there.

Looking back at events over recent years, we can analyse the successes and failures of the United Nations in this or that crisis. But it would be more purposeful to reflect on our own commitment to multilateralism, the extent of its applicability in the real world of today, and the manner in which it can be exercised through the United Nations. The reality is that an international institution like the United Nations can only be as effective as its Members allow it to be.

Our reflections on the United Nations should focus on three key aspects:

First, we need to introspect on some of the assumptions that have been made over the years concerning the will and reach of the United Nations. In the euphoria after the Cold War, there was a misplaced notion that the United Nations could solve every problem anywhere. Its enthusiasm and proactive stance on many issues reflected laudable intentions. But we soon realized that the United Nations does not possess magical powers to solve every crisis in all parts of the globe or to change overnight the motivation of leaders and communities around the world. //We need to clearly recognize, with a sense of realism, the limits to what the United Nations can achieve, and the changes of form and function required for it to play an optimal role in today's world. We need to clearly recognize, with a sense of realism, the limits to what the United Nations can achieve, and the changes that it needs to make to its form and function to play an optimal role in today's world.

Secondly, the Iraq issue has inevitably generated a debate on the functioning and the efficacy of the Security Council and of the United Nations itself. Over the decades, the United Nations membership has grown enormously. The scope of its activities has expanded greatly, with new specialized agencies and new programmes. But in the political and security dimensions of its activities, the United Nations has not kept pace with the changes in the world. For the Security Council to represent genuine multilateralism in its decisions and actions, its membership must reflect current world realities. Most United Nations Members today recognize the need for an enlarged and restructured Security Council, with more developing countries as permanent and non-permanent members. The permanent members guard their exclusivity. Some States with weak claims want to ensure that others do not enter the Council as permanent members. This combination of complacency and negativism has to be countered with a strong political will. The recent crises should serve as a warning to us that until the Security Council is reformed and restructured, its decisions cannot truly reflect the collective will of the community of nations.

Thirdly, even after such reform, the Security Council would have to develop suitable decision-making mechanisms that ensure better representation of the collective will of the international community. How can multilateralism be genuinely implemented? A single veto is an anachronism in today's world. On the other hand, the requirement of unanimity can sabotage imperative actions. A simple-majority vote may not be

sufficiently representative for major and serious issues. Should we aim for the highest common factor, or should we settle for the lowest common denominator? Democratic countries could use their national experience to provide feasible models for mechanisms and determine the extent of support required based on the impact of action to be taken.

The Secretary-General has rightly emphasized the urgent need for reform of the institutions and processes of the United Nations. We encourage his efforts in this direction. We should seek to implement these reforms within a specified time frame.

The Iraq issue continues to present a major challenge to the United Nations. At this point in time, it is not very productive to linger on the past. Our thoughts and concerns should be about the suffering of the people of Iraq. It is imperative that the people of Iraq should be empowered to determine their own future and to rebuild their nation.

The immediate priorities are ensuring security and stability, restoration of basic facilities and infrastructure and a road map of political processes for a representative Iraqi Government. It is clear that the United Nations has a crucial role to play in the process of political and economic reconstruction of that country. This has been acknowledged both by those who had opposed military action and by those who did not seek specific United Nations endorsement for it.

One issue on which the United Nations showed remarkable unanimity after 11 September was global terrorism. Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1456 (2003) were unequivocal in condemning all forms of terrorism and in calling for united action against support, shelter, sponsorship, arming, training and financing of terrorism or terrorists.

Unfortunately, the solidarity that was voiced has not translated into coherent and effective action. Terrorist acts continue to shatter our peace, from Mombasa to Moscow and from Baghdad to Bali. India has had more than its share of terrorism in various parts of the country. The global coalition against terrorism has registered successes in Afghanistan, but has not been able to extend this elsewhere. Some of its members are themselves part of the problem. We are sometimes led to enter into semantic arguments over the definition of terrorism. The search for root causes or imaginary freedom struggles provides alibis for killing innocent men, women and children.

There is much that the United Nations can do to carry forward the war against international terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Committee should develop measures to ensure compliance by Member States of their obligations under Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1456 (2003). We should have credible multilateral instruments to identify States that contravene these resolutions. Multilateral mechanisms must be created to detect and choke off international financial flows to terrorists and terrorist organizations.

A much better international system of information exchange and intelligence sharing needs to be devised to prevent terrorists from evading capture simply by crossing national borders. No State should be allowed to profess partnership with the global coalition against terror, while continuing to aid, abet and sponsor terrorism. To condone such double standards is to contribute to multiplying terrorism.

Yesterday, the President of Pakistan chose this august Assembly to make a public admission for the first time that Pakistan is sponsoring terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. After claiming that there is an indigenous struggle in Kashmir, he has offered to encourage a general cessation of violence within Kashmir, in return for reciprocal obligations and restraints.

We totally refuse to let terrorism become a tool of blackmail. Just as the world did not negotiate with al Qaeda or the Taliban, we shall not negotiate with terrorism. Were we to do so, we would be betraying the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who defied a most ferocious campaign of violence and intimidation sponsored from across our borders and participated in an election, which has been universally hailed as free and fair. This was an unequivocal expression of both determination and self-determination.

When the cross-border terrorism stops, or when we eradicate it, we can have a dialogue with Pakistan on the other issues between us.

While on this subject, I would also like to point out to the President of Pakistan that he should not confuse the legitimate aspiration for equality of nations with outmoded concepts of military parity.

We should be particularly concerned at the various recent revelations about clandestine transfers of weapons of mass destruction and their technologies. We face the frightening prospect of these weapons and technologies falling into the hands of terrorists. Surely

something needs to be done about the helplessness of international regimes in preventing such transactions, which clearly threaten international security. The same regimes expend considerable energy in imposing a variety of discriminatory technology-denial restrictions on responsible States.

Our preoccupation with terrorism should not dilute our commitment to tackle the non-military threats to human and international security. We have to sustain the fight against trafficking in narcotic drugs, human beings and small arms, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, diseases like malaria and tuberculosis that beset developing countries and the degradation of our common environment. Food security, energy security and health security are important goals.

The countries of the North and of the South — the developed, developing and transition economies — must resume their dialogue to build a better world for the present and future generations. For the agenda of globalization, Cancún was a disappointment. Significant progress was made at Johannesburg towards the realization of sustainable development, but the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change remains stalled and the Convention on Biological Diversity has not yielded any tangible benefits to the world's poor.

International economic relations continue to be characterized by inequities and inequalities. Globalization has helped sections of the international economy, including some developing countries; however, large communities have been left outside its pale. It has engendered economic crises and instability in several developing countries and sharply increased poverty.

Poverty is multidimensional. It extends beyond money and income to education, health care, skills enhancement, political participation at all levels from the local to the global, access to natural resources, clean water and air, and advancement of one's own culture and social organization.

Poverty alleviation requires resources on a far greater scale than now available. Globalization itself places constraints on Governments of developing countries in raising public resources for poverty alleviation. The promise of the climate change and biodiversity treaties to raise significant resources for investment and technology transfer is as yet unrealized. The resources of multilateral and bilateral development agencies are limited by the failure of industrialized countries to enhance development budgets.

Therefore, if the current regimes of globalization and sustainable development are to be expanded — or even to survive — they must be directly harnessed to provide the necessary resources for poverty alleviation. In fact, all international agreements and initiatives affecting developing countries have to be evaluated by their impact on poverty.

Developing countries need to coordinate their positions in international negotiations to promote the adoption of regimes which would help alleviate poverty. The India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum, which was established earlier this year, is an effort in this direction.

We in the developing countries do not have the luxury of time. Political compulsions force us to meet the aspirations of our people quickly, even as we subject ourselves to newer and more rigid international standards and norms. We owe it to our future generations to make strong efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. There is a mutuality of interest in this between the developed and the developing countries. Global interdependence today means that economic disasters in developing countries could create a backlash in developed countries. We hope the world will act in this spirit of enlightened self-interest.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of India for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency, Mr. Marc Forné Molné, the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Forné Molné (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): During the past two years, the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as in Africa, have brought turmoil to the world.

The United Nations has never been more necessary, yet perhaps never has its efficacy been so questioned nor, until the bombings last month in Baghdad, have its people been the object of such massive direct attack.

In the Principality of Andorra, encircled by the high mountains of the Pyrenees, we have lived peacefully and democratically between our neighbours for over 700 years. Since 1419, our Parliament has met to debate the problems of our people. It was not only our small size and isolation that kept us apart from the wars that ravaged Europe; rather, our desire for independence, the unity of our people, and also our ability to get along with our powerful neighbours made Andorra one of the oldest democratic States in the world.

In the past half-century, since the founding of the United Nations, the world has changed, and Andorra with it. Less than a century ago it was only possible to reach Andorra by horse. Now roads bring us 12 million tourists each year. Telephones, computers, satellites and airplanes bring the world to Andorra and we in turn have reached out to the world. In the time of my grandparents, Andorrans never travelled far from their mountains. Now we are world travellers.

One of the proud moments in the long history of our country was the day in 1993 — ten years ago — when we became a Member State of the United Nations. We joined with great hopes and all these years we have believed in its crucial role, despite the crises that may have cooled that belief.

The terrorist attack on the United States of America marked the beginning of a very complex stage in relations among nations and of a difficult equilibrium among different areas of our planet. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were both set in motion by this attack; one had the support of the United Nations while the other did not. While there is no point in returning to that debate, two questions must be addressed.

First, can the United Nations effectively respond to threats to world stability? Secondly, to what degree will its Member States be willing to work within the framework of the United Nations? Perhaps a cooling of passions will enable us to address these difficult issues clearly.

We are all too aware of the difficulties and dangers that beset both the citizens of these countries and the troops of Member States who are working to bring stability to these places. We hope for a rapid solution to the myriad difficulties involved in ending the series of sad and painful events that have taken place within these countries over the past few years.

The United Nations has a critical responsibility in fostering a constructive outcome for the Afghan and Iraqi people and also in resolving tension throughout the Middle East. In this regard I wish to express our confidence in the United Nations to bring an end to this complex and cruel conflict, a crucial step for the stability of the region and an important matter for the future of mankind. The United Nations will know how to find new ways and adequate solutions and will play a leading role in the establishment of new paths.

As politicians, we pride ourselves on our knowledge of the needs of our citizens. We are students at the university of the national will. The most successful among us have cultivated a keen sense of the everyday desires, frustrations, and goals that are important to our citizens. If we live in a democratic State, and ignore those needs, the voters will quickly look for others who do not.

The United Nations is a different kind of university. Here the lessons of national self-interest must give way to an international understanding. In this university of the world, our previous studies, by which I mean our own political careers, can only help us in the short term. But what we study together here are long-term lessons that can ensure the long-term survival of the world we share.

Although Andorra is small in scale, like many partners in the United Nations, what we smaller nations have to contribute is larger than our proportionate geographic scale or the relative size of our population. Indeed, our small size has made us by necessity careful observers of the needs of others and our centuries of independence have taught us responsibility to our citizens and our neighbours. We have never forgotten the bonds that link us to the world. Our history has taught us this.

Legend has it that Andorra was founded by Charlemagne, who, let us recall, was one of the key

historical players in the battles between Islam and Christianity. In the thirteenth century, however, it was the religious tension between the Count of Foix, who was a Cathar sympathizer, and the Catholic bishop of Urgell that led to a balanced agreement resulting in the independence of Andorra. Andorra came into existence partly as a buffer State between two powerful lords and between two approaches to Christianity: the orthodox and the Cathar.

The Cathars are only a distant memory now, but I raise this issue here because it points to the battleground of belief. Whereas the Church once summoned councils to struggle over the problems of heresy, we now gather at the United Nations not to insist on one form of belief, but to recognize and sustain the common ethical base that unites all beliefs, all ideologies, under the unshakeable canopy of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are now in the twenty-first century and not in the Middle Ages, but those who then were fundamentalist Christians and who resolved everything with anathemas, crusades and exiles have given place to those who practice other forms of religious intolerance of different persuasions. It is shameful to see that, even today, people are being killed or kill in the name of their God.

The work that the United Nations accomplishes, therefore, does not simply pay lip service to diversity. We need to advance, in all moral seriousness, an ethic of diversity that goes beyond recognizing the value of tolerance and multiculturalism and strives to implement shared ethical values in the service of world understanding.

In 1278, the strategic importance of Andorra lay in its proximity to the border between Catholic Europe and al-Andalus, Islamic Spain. The road that led to the great city of Cordoba — where the philosophy of Aristotle was retranslated from Greek and Arabic into Latin and re-entered the thought of the Christian West in the renaissance of the twelfth century — passed close by our country.

In the centre of that city, the Muslim rulers built an astonishing mosque with a forest of columns, made all the more beautiful by the presence within it of a synagogue. Such was its beauty that it was not destroyed when the Christians captured the city, but converted into a Cathedral, just as the great basilicas of Constantinople became the great mosques of Istanbul when that city fell to the Ottoman empire a century later.

What if we could learn from the events that have marked history, making use of the lessons of peaceful coexistence, avoiding past mistakes and appreciating the moments of openness between cultures in previous centuries?

We live in a world of vast contrasts where technological progress, used dangerously or simply without precaution, has made life more perilous on a global scale. Where once the great plague took years to make its way across Europe, modern plagues — be they biological viruses or computer viruses — travel across the globe in a matter of hours.

Pollution and global warming concern us all. The strange climactic shifts of recent years, the pollution of our great oceans and lakes, threaten our environment. Perhaps most dangerously, nuclear weapons threaten the life of everyone on the planet. All of these calamities, present or looming, demand international cooperation if we are to survive.

It is most sad that some of those who could do most to prevent the degradation of life on Earth continue to look in another direction — at the balance sheets of the big companies that contaminate the Earth most egregiously — and continue to apply an energy policy based on the uncontrolled exploitation and low cost of limited resources.

We have become a little world. We have become like a small country, rather like Andorra, where everybody knows everybody else's business. As we become smaller, the need to combat poverty and suffering has become all the more important. We cannot forget that images from more fortunate countries are beamed into the lives of people existing in difficult or even life-threatening circumstances across the world. No matter that these images may be propaganda and distortions of the truth — our modern technology, the source of so many comforts and advantages, is also demonstrating the full scale of our differences.

We must learn to treat all members of the world as we would like to see our own citizens treated. We need to insist on a decent life for everyone, for all mankind.

Andorra is committed to aiding development around the world. Since 1995, we have regularly increased our budgetary contributions and hope to devote 0.7 per cent of our budget to third-world aid within two years. Our philosophy of development supports the institutions of the United Nations, looking to small-scale solutions that foster self-reliance and local initiative. We are particularly enthusiastic about projects aimed at children, education and those who help women to establish their own businesses. We are also committed to encouraging sustainable farming because we recognize that proper farming practices provide the best defence against catastrophic crop failures. To that end, Andorra also proposes within the next year to become a member of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The insignificant part of the Andorran budget devoted to the purchase of weapons resulted in the composer and singer Pete Seeger dedicating a song to us in the 1960s. His verses still echo today, just as they did when he made a whole generation sing "We shall overcome. We shall live in peace". Many things have happened since those days and Andorra no longer allocates so much as $4.50 towards its defence budget. We do not spend a penny.

In this diverse and contradictory world, with all that is squandered on new weapons and old, the whole of mankind could live decently. We could eliminate all diseases. Education and culture would be made available to all. Thus, we could end fanaticism and all those who abuse the ignorance of the people would end up without victims or lackeys.

Let us try and make some use of these long debates and speeches which we applaud with diplomatic courtesy, often without even hearing them. Too much is at stake for all of us.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Bertie Ahern, Prime Minister of Ireland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of Ireland.

Mr. Bertie Ahern, Prime Minister of Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Ireland, His Excellency Mr. Bertie Ahern. I invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ahern (Ireland): For the United Nations and the system of collective security that it represents, the past year has been a traumatic one.

Our Organization could ill afford the loss of the dedicated and experienced members of staff who were killed by an act of terrorism in Baghdad on the 19 August. I do not diminish the contribution of each and every one of those who lost their lives in the cause of humanity if I give individual mention to Sergio Vieira de Mello. I would like to pay particular tribute to his work in bringing to birth the new State of Timor Leste, which has become the latest Member of the United Nations.

We are living in a period of great insecurity. We are stalked by fear — fear of war, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, famine, disease, ethnic and religious hatred, and organized crime. Governments are acting, individually and in groups, to shield their people from these threats. However, the nature of the challenge requires coordinated global action.

Fortunately, we have the United Nations Organization, which brings together the nations of the world in the service of international peace and security. If we did not already have such an organization, we would surely have to invent it. The tragedy for mankind is that we do not make the most effective use of it. We are frequently told by commentators that the United Nations has failed. All too often, it is difficult to disagree.

So, who is to blame? To answer that question we have to ask: what is the United Nations? The answer is to be found in the Charter. This Organization was established in the name of the peoples of the United Nations. When the United Nations fails, it is because we, the Governments that represent the peoples of the United Nations, have failed, individually or collectively, to meet our obligations.

Our most common failing, I would submit, is that we frequently overlook the fact that this Organization was created to serve not just our own nation, but all mankind. Too often, Members seek to use this

Organization to pursue their national interests by seeking to have it adopt resolutions that are partial or biased; by ignoring its resolutions when these do not suit them; and by encouraging action on certain issues and conflicts while blocking action on or even consideration of, others. All too many of us have been guilty of such an approach.

We simply cannot afford to continue with this attitude. The world is fast changing. Every day brings a new awareness of just how interdependent we all are. The option of shutting ourselves safely away behind protective walls no longer exists. We have to learn to live together, to share the resources of this planet and to look after each other. We can retain our national, cultural and religious identities, but we need to recognize that we are, first and foremost, all members of the human race, and we must act accordingly.

We need a viable system of global governance that can ensure international peace and security. To be viable, such a system must possess two essential qualities: effectiveness and legitimacy. To be effective, it requires the unambiguous support of the entire community of nation States. Its decisions must be respected and, where necessary, we must be ready and able to act to secure such respect. To retain legitimacy, the system must be seen to work in the interests of the entire international community.

I appeal, therefore, to the Governments represented at this session of the General Assembly for a change in our attitude to the United Nations. Let us cease treating it as a tool useful only to the extent that it can deliver on our national agenda. Instead, let us use the United Nations to harness our collective resources in the interests of each and every member of mankind. To adapt the words of President John F. Kennedy, let us ask not what the United Nations can do for us, but what we can do for the United Nations.

The United Nations needs reform. We all accept that. Our institutions are not sufficiently effective and, in some instances, are not adequately representative of today's membership. We have discussed these issues at great length, but we have balked at taking the hard decisions. The time has come to put the interests of the wider international community before narrow national concerns.

We are fortunate, at this moment, to have as Secretary-General a man of the stature of Kofi Annan; a man who is held in universal regard and who is seen to stand for the interests of the entire international community. He has not shrunk from grasping the nettle of reform, and in his address to this Assembly he called on the Members of this Organization to grasp it with him. We must find the courage and generosity to take up this challenge.

The past two years have been a particularly sober period in the history of mankind. There has been so much death and destruction across the globe. How much of this might have been avoided if the United Nations had been better able to fulfil the noble purposes set out in the Charter?

I do not claim that it is possible to eradicate man's capacity for evil or to totally eliminate the tendency to seek to resolve disputes through violence. But I do submit that a stronger, more resolute, more respected and more active United Nations might have prevented some of the suffering of the past two years.

The world today is very different from that which existed when the Charter was drawn up. It is smaller, more crowded, more combustible. Isolated pockets of human habitation have been brought together by a population explosion, migration, faster and cheaper air travel, television, the Internet, the growth of free trade and the development of weapons of mass destruction. What happens in one part of the world can increasingly have an instant and dramatic effect in another part.

This evolution has raised questions concerning the interpretation of two important provisions of the Charter. The first is paragraph 7 of Article 2, which in effect excludes the United Nations from intervening in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State. Yet the problem arises increasingly in our global society as to whether and when a matter can be considered as falling entirely within the domestic jurisdiction of a State. Some situations are clearer than others.

In my view, when events within a country threaten international peace and security, they become the legitimate interest of the international community. Similarly, I cannot accept that the international community should stand by and accept the large-scale, flagrant and persistent violation of human rights. We have received sharp lessons in the past. The trigger for intervening to prevent an attempted genocide should not be the moment that refugees begin to flood across the border.

At the same time, international intervention raises serious questions. It can also pose serious risks to the international regime. Clearly, intervention is objectively called for in some extreme cases. But there is a need to work carefully through this concept with a view to forging an international consensus around it.

Another issue that has recently come to the fore and was highlighted by the Secretary-General is that of Article 51 of the Charter and the conditions under which Member States have the right to act in self-defence. The development of weapons of mass destruction in the period since the signing of the Charter, and the appearance of non-State actors with the capacity for mass destruction, raise serious questions as to the point at which a State might consider it necessary to act in self-defence. This is also an issue that requires serious reflection.

My Government would be deeply concerned at the widespread acceptance of a doctrine of pre-emptive strike. Given the ever more lethal nature of modern weapons, the risk of large-scale death, destruction and escalation are enormous.

More effective than striking pre-emptively, of course, is to pre-empt the risk of conflict through a wide range of steps in the diplomatic, economic, humanitarian and other areas.

We should devote more attention to dealing with the root causes of conflict. We must seek to identify potential conflicts as early as possible and deal with them before they get out of hand. Where conflict nevertheless becomes a possibility, we should act more assertively to head it off. We simply cannot afford to accept the existence of so-called forgotten or ignored conflicts. Any conflict that threatens international peace and security is the United Nations legitimate business and should be on the agenda of the Security Council.

I would now like to touch briefly on a number of specific issues that are of concern to my Government.

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people continues to pose a serious threat to world peace. My own country's difficult national experience shows that there is no such thing as a straight line to peace. Our experience in Ireland clearly demonstrates that farsighted leaders cannot allow their efforts to be held hostage by terrorists and extremists. They must have the wisdom to look beyond the politics of the last atrocity.

What is more, leaders must be prepared to deal with each other. As the Nobel Laureate John Hume once said, "you make peace with your enemies, not your friends". President Arafat has a responsibility to lead his people away from violence and back to the negotiating table. It is a responsibility that he must assume. Threats to expel or assassinate him are deeply misguided and dangerous and can only further delay efforts to achieve a settlement.

Lasting peace can only be achieved through negotiation. Palestinians must realize that violence has failed. Terrorism is wrong and has brought nothing but misery to both Israel and Palestine. It has made compromise more difficult than ever.

Israel must see that repression and attempts at physical separation will not deliver long-term security. The most effective means for Israel to secure a peaceful future would be to accept the Palestinian people's right to a viable State of their own on the basis of the 1967 borders. Israel should immediately reverse its policy of building settlements, settler-only roads and a security wall on Palestinian territory.

It is imperative that the parties re-engage in the task of implementing the road map, leading to a two-State solution based on the vision enshrined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). They need the support of the Quartet. But such mediation will not succeed if it is, or is perceived to be, one-sided. We must be careful to ensure that our demands are balanced and that we hold both sides equally to account.

The people of Iraq are suffering from events that in most cases are not of their making. We want to see this suffering brought to an end as soon as possible. The Iraqi people can only play a part in that by rejecting those who engage in violence and industrial sabotage. The occupying Powers must be scrupulous in meeting their obligations under international law.

The Iraqi people need and deserve the support of a united international community in the political and economic reconstruction of their country. The United Nations, with its unique experience and legitimacy, is essential to efforts to help the Iraqi people recover their sovereignty as soon as possible and to forge a new Iraq, at peace with itself and with its neighbours. We look to the members of the Security Council at this crucial moment to assume their responsibilities and to reach an agreement on a new resolution that reflects the interests

of the people of Iraq and that can enjoy the necessary support of the region and of the broad international community.

The proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons poses a serious threat to international peace and security. We must recommit ourselves to controlling the spread of such weapons, and working towards their complete elimination. This can only be achieved through a comprehensive and rigorous system of international treaties and obligations that are verifiable and universal.

Ireland, with its partners in the New Agenda Coalition, will continue its efforts in respect of nuclear disarmament during this year's General Assembly. Ireland calls on all States who are concerned about the issue of weapons of mass destruction to become constructively engaged in the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation process. There can be no room for double standards.

We must also remain resolute in our determination to counter the threat of terrorism. We owe it to the victims of 11 September, and to the victims of terrorist atrocities before and since then. The measures put in place by the Security Council have made it more difficult for international terrorist networks to organize and to finance their activities. These organizations, however, do not stand still. We must remain vigilant and redouble our efforts to make it impossible for the agents of international terror to operate.

In doing so, however, we must be clear that the need to act against terrorism offers no license for action contrary to the United Nations Charter, or against the body of international human rights and humanitarian law that we have so painstakingly constructed.

We must also seek to deal with the causes of terrorism. Terrorism is not some kind of original sin. No child is born a terrorist. At some point in their lives, some people become terrorists. We have to identify how and why.

And if we find that young people are being indoctrinated into terrorism, we have to deal with those who seek to incite hatred and terror. If we find that they act, however wrongly, in reaction to real or perceived injustice, we have to confront that fact and, as far as it is possible, seek to eliminate the reality or perception of that injustice. To seek to understand the causes of terrorism should not be misunderstood as being soft on terrorism. On the contrary, it is an essential step in its elimination. I can speak from experience of developments in my own country for many decades.

The Government and people of Afghanistan face important challenges in the coming year, in particular the adoption of a constitution and the holding of national elections. Severe difficulties stand in the way, especially the precarious security situation. The sustained and wholehearted support of the international community is required if Afghanistan is to recover from its long ordeal. For Ireland's part, it has delivered on its pledges to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

In Africa, encouraging progress has been made in the past year towards the resolution of some long-standing and intractable conflicts. We urge the parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to implement the commitments that they have entered into. Neighbouring States must abide by their commitments and their obligation not to interfere in the area.

Sierra Leone remains on track, with the help of the United Nations, towards a future and peaceful development. And progress has been achieved in Liberia. I want to pay tribute to the efforts of those Member States that have contributed to this positive development. Their continued engagement, along with the United Nations, will be indispensable in helping the people of Liberia to consolidate what has been achieved and to build peace in their country. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that my Government in the next few days will recommend to our Parliament that Ireland's Defence Forces participate with a sizeable contingent in the forthcoming United peacekeeping operation in Liberia.

Respect for human rights is an essential foundation for peace and security. Lack of respect for human rights is at the root of many conflicts, internal and international. The promotion of human rights is rightly the concern of the international community as a whole. It must remain a central task of the United Nations and must be integrated into all United Nations activities.

There is no room for complacency. We must all recognize that no country, including our own, is perfect. We can all do better.

I pay tribute to the many brave individuals around the world — defenders of human rights — who risk

discrimination, imprisonment or worse to ensure that Governments live up to their human rights obligations.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court was a clear signal of the determination of the international community to bring to justice those who are involved in genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Ireland, together with its partners in the European Union, will continue to offer firm support to the International Criminal Court, as its work gets under way. I urge those who have not signed or ratified the Rome Statute to do so, and I urge all States to adhere firmly to the principles on which it is based.

The peace process in Northern Ireland remains a major priority for the Irish Government. Regrettably, due to diminishing trust between the political parties, the devolved political institutions in Northern Ireland were suspended nearly one year ago. Since then, we have been working to re-establish the trust and confidence necessary to restore and sustain these institutions.

This involves both ensuring that all vestiges of paramilitary activity are consigned to the past and that all parties commit themselves to the full and stable operation of the democratic institutions of the Good Friday Agreement. Following intensive negotiations, we came tantalizingly close in April to making the required breakthrough but unfortunately did not get matters fully resolved at that time.

After one of the most peaceful summers on the streets of Northern Ireland, the process is now entering another decisive phase of challenge and opportunity. Developments over the next few weeks will have a crucial bearing on whether elections — which I believe should take place before the end of the year — will be held in an atmosphere that is conducive to forming a working administration on the other side of the polling day.

For this to happen, all of the pro-Agreement parties must show leadership and courage, face up to their responsibilities and take the decisions they know are right, and encourage their constituencies to reach out to others. As partners in this process, Prime Minister Blair and I — and our two Governments — are working closely together to support and encourage all those political and community leaders who are taking risks for peace.

From other areas around the world struggling to escape from a legacy of violence, we in Ireland know all too well that a process of conflict resolution cannot rest still. Either it continues to move forward or it loses momentum and direction and falters. To complacently assume that current opportunities for progress can be deferred until a more politically convenient moment is both wrong and dangerous. In the case of Northern Ireland, the moment of opportunity is now and it is my hope that in the weeks and months ahead all of the parties who subscribed to the Good Friday Agreement will collectively rise to that challenge.

Poverty and insecurity go hand in hand. The efforts of the United Nations to promote international peace and security must be closely aligned with its work in tackling the root causes of poverty.

When I launched the United Nations Human Development Report in Dublin last July, I noted how powerful a reminder it was that the world is becoming a more unequal place. According to the report, 54 countries — the great majority of them in Africa — are poorer now than they were in 1990. A world where more than 1.2 billion people continue to live on less than a dollar a day, where 14 million children are orphaned because of HIV/AIDS and where women in the poorest countries are 175 times more likely to die in childbirth than women in rich countries is inherently unjust and hence insecure.

The President returned to the Chair.

At the United Nations special session on HIV/AIDS in 2001, I said Ireland would increase its contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS by an additional $30 million per year. Last year, our spending on HIV/AIDS programmes exceeded $40 million — a ten-fold increase over the past three years.

The Millennium Declaration called for a global partnership for development, and as in any partnership, there are responsibilities on all sides. Undertakings on official development assistance, debt relief, and governance must be achieved. We must be rigorous in assessing our progress in 2005, as we committed ourselves to doing.

At the Millennium Summit, I committed Ireland to reaching the United Nations target for official development assistance of 0.7 per cent of gross national product by 2007. Since then, Ireland has increased its official development assistance to 0.41 per cent and remains committed to reaching the target by 2007.

Fair and open international trade is essential for global peace and prosperity. It is an integral part of the multilateral system that we are pledged to protect. I regret that it did not prove possible to reach agreement at the recent World Trade Organization talks in Cancun. I understand the frustration of those who consider themselves unfairly treated in global markets. But if we turn our back on the multilateral trading system and allow trade and investment to be diverted and distorted by bilateral and regional arrangements, we will damage — perhaps irreparably — the best tool available to us to make serious inroads into poverty and to raise standards of living on a global basis. Let us redouble our efforts to achieve an agreement that offers fair market access and at the same time allows all of us to preserve the essence of our unique cultures and environments.

The past year might have been a difficult one for the United Nations, but events have demonstrated that for the people of the world it is the indispensable Organization at the centre of our system of collective security. We have invested it with unique legitimacy and authority. People around the world look to it in hope and expectation. Let us work together to make sure that the United Nations is an organization worthy of the ideals enshrined in its Charter, worthy of the trust of those who rely on it for help and protection, worthy of the idealism and dedication of those who work for it and worthy of the sacrifice of those who have given their lives in its service.

As the Secretary-General made clear when he addressed this session of General Assembly: we are at a fork in the road. Let us be sure to take the right road.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Ireland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bertie Ahern, Prime Minister of Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Mr. Edward Fenech Adami, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Edward Fenech Adami, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, The Honourable Mr. Edward Fenech Adami, and in inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Adami (Malta): I would first like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. You have an important and challenging task ahead. In executing your duties, you can be assured of my full support and that of the Maltese delegation.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the outgoing President of the fifty-seventh session, Mr. Jan Kavan, for the dedication and initiative with which he accomplished his task. I would also like to express our support for the Secretary-General. The past 12 months have been a particularly difficult time for him and for the Organization he serves so well. We respect and admire the patience, tact, wisdom and determination that he has once again demonstrated in these trying times.

The attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August has added an unwelcome dimension of tragedy and urgency to this year's session of the General Assembly. Our thoughts are with the relatives and friends of the victims, to whom we again express our deepest condolences. Not for the first time in its history the United Nations is mourning the violent death of its talented servants in the course of their duty.

Besides being a human tragedy, it was indeed — for the first time — also a direct and deliberate attack on the United Nations itself. In this sense, an analysis of the implications of the attack in Baghdad needs to form an integral part of the broader considerations relating to the structures and objectives of the international system.

The reality is that in the United Nations the international community has a system that is both vital and indispensable. However, it is also a fact that the international community has taken this system for granted for too long. Events over the last few weeks and months constitute a renewed reminder that urgent reform is necessary. We need to heed the Secretary-General's advice that this action has to be radical.

One important element in the process of building international cooperation and solidarity lies in the regional dimension. That dimension was given its importance in the original architecture of the United

Nations Charter. Over the last 12 months Malta, together with nine other countries, successfully concluded negotiations to join one of the most creative and impressive manifestations of regional cooperation: the European Union. The results of those negotiations were confirmed by the people of Malta, first in a referendum and subsequently in the general elections held earlier this year. Our desire to join the European Union stems primarily from our appreciation of both the history and the present reality of the European-Mediterranean region, and of Malta's place and role in that region.

At the same time, for Malta, the objective of membership in the European Union has also been a further means of deepening and reinforcing its longstanding commitment towards international cooperation and solidarity.

We are gratified to see how the European Union is fast becoming one of the main partners of the United Nations in the collective endeavour towards global cooperation and solidarity. We are encouraged to discover how much that partnership enhances the opportunities for even the smaller members to play a positive and constructive role in many issues of global concern.

Among such issues, the question of security in all of its complex dimensions has assumed formidable proportions this year. One of the more disturbing aspects in that regard is the way in which the different dimensions of terrorism and arms control have become intertwined. That link has become a factor in the sometimes differing perceptions of the sources of the security risks faced by States. In turn, that has led to differences of emphasis in action priorities, even among States with otherwise very convergent policies and approaches. When such differences are reflected within the Security Council itself, there is a risk of erosion to the still fragile structure of international legitimacy.

On the question of Iraq in particular, it is critically important for the Security Council to reach early agreement on the role the United Nations must play in the re-establishment of order and legitimacy in that country. We strongly urge all members of the Council, in particular the permanent members, to spare no effort to achieve that objective.

The question of armaments today confronts us in its bewildering complexity. At one extreme is the outrageous reality of child soldiers brandishing lethal conventional weapons. At the other extreme is the increasingly credible prospect that terrorist groups will procure and use weapons of mass destruction to bring major tragedy and destruction to the hearts of States. These extremes have intruded into the more traditional disarmament process that has itself been moving forward hesitantly and intermittently over the years.

Yet however hesitant and intermittent it may be, the disarmament process has produced some results upon which we can build further. A range of agreements and instruments are already available concerning both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. The more immediate challenges in this regard lie in the areas of compliance and verification.

Over recent months, the European Union has been working on a comprehensive security strategy on the issues of non-proliferation and weapons of mass destruction. One of the key principles underpinning this strategy is the need to uphold and implement the multilateral treaties and agreements that exist in this area. Equally important is the need to support the multilateral institutions charged with verifying and ensuring compliance with these agreements. Primary among these institutions is the United Nations.

Terrorism in our day is a phenomenon that is unprecedented in terms of motivation, tenacity and methods. Over the past 12 months terrorist acts have indiscriminately struck peoples, both in areas of active conflict and elsewhere. The counter-terrorism measures put in place following the attack here in New York on 11 September 2001 provide us with tools which can have an effect if applied forcefully, universally and consistently. Our response must remain adamant and clear. At the same time, as the Secretary-General reminds us, while there is an unquestionable need to confront terrorist groups with determination, this should never be at the expense of the commitment to human rights.

The objective of increased security at the global level demands efforts across a range of widely different fronts, ranging from issues relating to peacemaking and peacekeeping, to issues relating to economic and social development.

The United Nations has a steady record of positive involvement in peacekeeping. The recent experiences in Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Kosovo provide encouraging instances of this. The Secretary-General reminds us that peacekeeping efforts, and especially what he terms "robust" peacekeeping, must

be provided with both the necessary capabilities and an adequate mandate. He also correctly points out that peacekeeping must be preceded by effective action towards conflict resolution.

The question of Palestine is one issue with regard to which sustained efforts at conflict resolution have not yet prevailed. Over the past few weeks we have been witnessing the gradual disintegration of yet another major and sustained effort at peacemaking in that region.

The immediate obstacles to peace in Palestine arise from two contrasting directions. On the one hand is the reality of an illegal occupation of territory originally achieved, and continuously maintained, by armed force. On the other is the reality of a resistance to this occupation that uses unacceptable means of civilian terror and destruction to pursue its ends.

These two realities feed upon each other in a vicious cycle of ever-escalating hatred and violence. Perhaps the most frightening aspect of the situation in Palestine is the fact that each successive failure of effort towards peacemaking ratchets up the level of hatred and violence. The international community needs to find a way of breaking the conditionality which makes the two extremes feed upon each other.

Israel needs to clearly recognize the illegality of its presence in the occupied territories. This implies the reversal of the measures that are accompanying this occupation — in particular the building and maintenance of settlements and the construction of the partition wall on Palestinian territory.

Furthermore, the support of the chosen leadership of the Palestinian people is necessary if progress towards peace and stability is to be achieved. In this spirit, we call upon Israel to desist from any act of deportation and cease any threat to the safety of the elected President of the Palestinian Authority.

For their part, the Palestinians must recognize that all violent acts against civilians are unacceptable and must stop unconditionally. The Palestinian Authority needs to assert its control and prevent any further acts of terrorism.

In spite of the latest setbacks, the approach by the Quartet still needs to be supported and encouraged. By virtue of its composition, the Quartet offers the best prospects for finding ways of breaking the conditionality that feeds the extremes on both sides. The hope remains that, at the core of both the Israeli and the Palestinian populations, the desire for peace and reconciliation is stronger than the delirium of fear and hatred.

Malta always views the problem of Palestine from the perspective of its effect on issues of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean. Our membership of the European Union will provide us with enhanced opportunities to intensify our traditional role in this regard.

Progress in the process of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation has been slow but steady since the European Union launched its Euro-Mediterranean initiative in 1995. The process has itself been affected by the vicissitudes of the situation in Palestine over these years. Yet the general trend has remained positive, even in the most difficult of times.

The recent resolution of the Lockerbie issue further helps in creating the right atmosphere for enhanced regional cooperation.

It is now our hope that the work of the Secretary-General, accompanied by the efforts of persuasion of the European Union, will succeed in resolving one of the still outstanding problems in our region — the problem of Cyprus. Malta would welcome in May next year the integration of a reunited Cyprus into the folds of the European Union.

One of the major strengths of the Euro-Mediterranean process lies in the linkage that it maintains between security issues and wider issues of cooperation in the economic and humanitarian fields. In his report this year, the Secretary-General underlines the fact that issues related to development form an important part of the commitments undertaken under the Millennium Declaration. The Secretary-General notes that a stronger consensus has been forged on this issue. But he also cautions that grave doubts remain as to whether Member States are sufficiently determined to act on this consensus.

The failure of the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún last week highlights the difficulties inherent in translating broad consensus into concrete action. In the area of trade, as in other areas of development, it is indeed the case that globalization has exposed a major disequilibrium and great inequalities in the international arena. In some respects it has also exacerbated the injustices arising from those

inequalities. There is an even greater need, therefore, for the international community to persevere in its efforts towards more concrete and effective measures of consensus-building. The high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS that recently concluded highlights the way in which problems that have a global dimension need to be tackled.

The problem of AIDS also underlines the importance of continuing efforts towards norm-setting in the various dimensions of international life.

The practice of holding annual treaty events, instituted following the Millennium Summit, has proved its value in this regard. This year's event is focusing on Treaties against transnational organized crime and terrorism. On that occasion, Malta will be depositing its ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and two of its protocols. We will have thus already ratified or acceded to 11 of the 15 Treaties on which the Secretary-General has focused for this year's event.

One area where norm setting is in its early stages concerns the issue of cloning. Malta approaches this issue from a moral and ethical standpoint based on the deepest respect for human life. We believe that while scientific considerations are sometimes relevant in matters of this nature, final decisions must primarily be based on fundamental human, ethical and moral considerations. In this spirit, the draft resolution proposing a convention that bans all forms of human cloning fully reflects our views. For this reason we will support this draft resolution. At the same time, we also believe that on issues of such deep ethical and moral sensitivity, real progress can only be achieved through consensus.

The issues before the General Assembly are many and wide-ranging. Such a dense and varied agenda confirms the relevance and vitality of our Organization. At the same time, it also points to the problems regarding the effectiveness and functionality about which so many of us are concerned.

I trust that under your guidance, Mr. President, the Assembly will find the wisdom and energy to clearly define its priorities and take the necessary action. I wish you every success in your endeavours.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Edward Fenech Adami, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, His Excellency Mr. Silvan Shalom.

Mr. Shalom (Israel): I would like to congratulate His Excellency, the Foreign Minister of Saint Lucia, upon his assumption of the Presidency of the General Assembly, and wish him much success.

Until just one month ago, every person in this hall and every Member of this Organization joined us in the hope that the Middle East peace process might finally be back on track, and that a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might be on the horizon. The establishment of a new Palestinian Government promised an end to terror and a new beginning.

This glimmer of hope was darkened on 19 August by the extremists who blew up a bus full of Jewish families on their way home from prayers at the Western Wall, the holiest site in the Jewish religion. Twenty-three people, young and old, mothers and babies in their cradles, were slaughtered in that attack. That attack was carried out by Hamas, a terrorist organization, which, under the road map, should have been dismantled by the Palestinian Authority. Failure to dismantle Hamas and other extremist organizations has brought our diplomatic efforts to a standstill. Rather than acting to fulfil its obligation, the Palestinian Authority has chosen the route of inaction, and complicity in terror.

We cannot allow this to continue. We must restore hope that we can build a better future for our children. The infrastructure of terror must be dismantled so that we can put our peace efforts back on track. There is no time other than now. There is no other way.

For many years it was thought that terrorism in the Middle East was Israel's problem, not the world's. Today, the world knows otherwise. Today, it is not only Israel that mourns the loss of its loved ones, including women and children and babies, at the hands of the terrorists. Sadly, we have been joined by peoples from across the globe — from Mombassa to Casablanca and from Moscow to Bali. Even the United Nations, which for so many has been a symbol of peace and goodwill, is not immune.

Gathered here today in New York, just two short years after 11 September, the community of nations knows that those who seek to advance their political agendas through killing innocents are ready to strike at anyone or anything that represents the values of freedom and human life.

Terrorism has declared war on us all. Israel has often stood alone in this battle. A country that has suffered more than any other from terrorism, we have always understood the danger it poses to democracy and freedom everywhere, even when others refused to see this, and condemned us for our actions. We have always understood that terrorism, no matter what cause it claims to serve, seeks only to destroy, rather than to build.

There can be no neutrality in the war against terrorism and there can be no immunity for those who engage in it. Abstaining is not an option. This is not a war of choice. Terrorism will not be eliminated until the world unites against it. Our only choice is to win. Every member of the international community must take concrete and proactive measures to cut off all channels of financial, moral and political support to this common enemy.

States Members of this institution that sponsor terrorists and give them shelter are accomplices in the acts of terror themselves. They must be held accountable for their crimes. It is no coincidence that States that sponsor terrorism, like Iran and Syria, are also striving to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Their hostility to freedom and the rule of law puts the very future of humanity in jeopardy.

I know that many in this place see Yasser Arafat as the symbol of the Palestinian struggle. Tragically, for his people and for ours, he is one of the world's icons of terror. In the 10 years since Arafat made a commitment to Israel and the world that he would no longer use terror, 1,126 Israelis have been killed and thousands wounded in 19,000 separate Palestinian terrorist attacks. In relative numbers, this would be the same as 11,000 French or 56,000 Americans dying from terrorism in the same period of time.

This carnage must stop. Its impact on both societies is devastating. Yasser Arafat bears direct responsibility for this terrible suffering. He has led his people along the path of terror — from hijackings to suicide bombings — for more than 30 years, always preferring Israeli pain over Palestinian gain. He has been — and he remains — the greatest obstacle to peace between our peoples. For as long as he controls the levers of power, no moderate leadership can emerge. To vote for Arafat, like we saw in this Assembly just last week, is to vote against the Palestinian people. When Arafat wins, terrorism wins, and we all lose. Instead of rallying around Arafat, the international community must rally around the genuine interests of the Palestinian people. They must do so now, before he leads them even further down the path of terror and destruction.

When a responsible and empowered Palestinian leadership finally emerges — a leadership ready to join the war on terror — it will find us a willing partner for peace. Israel is committed to the vision for Middle East peace laid out by United States President George Bush on 24 June 2002. Israel will not compromise on the safety of its citizens, but we will go the extra mile, as we have proven before, to bring peace and security to both our peoples.

We are ready to work with the Palestinians and with the international community to make this vision a reality. For this to happen, the Palestinian leadership must take the moral and strategic decision to abandon terrorism once and for all, and make peacemaking possible. They must guide their people to build their own society, rather than seek to destroy ours. They, too, must understand that it is not poverty that breeds terror but terror that breeds poverty.

We cannot stop only at dismantling the infrastructure of terror. We must also build an infrastructure of peace. It is up to political and moral leaders everywhere to foster an environment which rejects extremism and empowers the peacemakers. This is particularly so in the Arab and Muslim world, where incitement against Israel closes hearts and minds to the possibility of peace.

Leaders must guide their people away from the culture of hate, and replace it with a culture of tolerance. Concrete expressions of cooperation and exchange must be built in media and government, education, science and business, to reinforce the message of tolerance and acceptance.

For the sake of our collective future, voices of moderation must be heard. For the sake of our collective future, Israel and the Arab nations must learn to live together side by side, to overcome our conflicts just as the nations of Europe have learned to overcome theirs. Israel is living among its Arab neighbours. We

believe in a common future of peace and prosperity with them. My many meetings with Arab leaders over the last few days have encouraged me to believe that together we can make our region a better place.

This culture of peace must permeate not only the borders of the Middle East, it must permeate the walls of the United Nations as well. In the past, the United Nations has shown us that it can play a positive role. This Assembly was key to the founding of the State of Israel, 55 years ago. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) are our guideposts to negotiations and peace.

To play such a constructive role in the future, the United Nations must reform. It must move away from the partisan hostility that has taken over its Middle East agenda. For more than three decades, this Assembly has passed every year a litany of resolutions designed to discredit Israel, challenge its interests, and promote the will of its greatest enemies.

In my hand I am holding a collection of the decisions of the fifty-seventh General Assembly on the Middle East — 175 pages filled not with hope, but with the negative agendas of the past. No other country has suffered such unjustified attack and consistent discrimination within the United Nations system. The time has come to end this campaign of diplomatic incitement. For the sake of Israelis and Palestinians — for the sake of the United Nations and peace itself — I call on this body to rise above the tired politics of yesterday, and adopt a new, courageous agenda for tomorrow.

I call on the General Assembly to abandon the automatic adoption of anti-Israel resolutions and to find ways of making itself relevant once again to the interests of the people it claims to serve. I call on this Assembly to fulfil its historic mission and help promote what unites us, not what divides us.

On the morning of 1 February of this year, Israel lost its first astronaut in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster — a skilled and courageous pilot whom I knew personally, a child of Holocaust survivors, a national hero. Colonel Ilan Ramon embodied the spirit of our nation. He was a man of courage and action, dedicated to the well-being of his people. Just as he sought to contribute to the advancement of his fellow man, he met his death, together with colleagues from the United States and India, on a scientific mission in the name of humanity as a whole.

Israel's place in such endeavours of international cooperation and accomplishment is no coincidence. In the 55 years since the State of Israel was established, recognized and welcomed into the family of nations, our achievements in the fields of science and technology, the arts and literature and agriculture and medicine have come to rank with the best in the world. Our international cooperation programme is celebrated in over a hundred countries around the globe, sharing skills, experience and knowledge for the benefit of millions of people. We extend this hand of friendship to all the nations of the world. We welcome our improving relations with Europe, just as we remain committed to promoting closer ties with the nations of Africa, Asia and the Americas.

The Zionist vision of Israel's founders was to bring into the world a State in our ancient homeland to serve as a haven from persecution for our people, a place where the Jewish people could fulfil its right to self-determination in the modern era and a bastion of democracy and opportunity for all its citizens. Our founders also made a promise not just to the people of Israel, but also to the people of the Middle East as a whole — to pursue peace and to work for the common advancement of our region.

I know personally the profound meaning of this historic undertaking. I came to Israel as a young refugee from Tunisia. I serve as one of hundreds of thousands of immigrants to whom Israel has granted promise and protection, freedom and opportunity, through the values and institutions of democracy.

I stand here today to reaffirm, before the nations of the world, the commitment of my country to peace. Peace for the people of Israel is both a moral and historic imperative. "Shalom" — the word for peace in Hebrew — is central to our language and our heritage. It is how we say "hello" and it is how we say "goodbye". It is a name we give to our children. It is my own family name.

It was our prophet Isaiah, who brought this message of peace to the world centuries ago, when he said: "And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against Nation, neither shall they learn war any more".

Israel's historic record is clear. Whenever a true partner for peace has emerged, he has been met with Israel's extended hand. This was true when President

Anwar Sadat of Egypt came to Jerusalem in 1977 and it was true when King Hussein of Jordan signed the Peace Treaty with us in 1994. The same is true today. Israel stands ready to complete the circle of peace with all its neighbours — real peace, not just peace for the headlines, but peace which brings an end to violence and hostility and positive change for the citizens of our region.

From this great rostrum — a rostrum shared by all humanity — I call on the leaders of Syria and Lebanon, of Iran and of the Palestinian people to abandon once and for all their hostility towards us and to join us in building a better future for our children.

This evening, I shall return to Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people, to join with them in celebrating Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. According to our tradition, this is a time when God determines the fate of each and every individual for the coming year. These are days of reflection and prayer. May all our prayers for peace and for life be answered, and may the actions and deeds of all the States and peoples represented here in this Hall bring to mankind peace and all the blessings that life can offer.

The President: I now call on His Excellency the Right Honourable Mr. Jack Straw, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Straw (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I begin by paying a tribute to Dr. Akila Al-Hashimi, a senior member of the Iraqi Governing Council, who died earlier today.

I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Al-Hashimi earlier this year in London and later in Baghdad, and I was struck by her courage and her dedication to the Iraqi people. Dr. Al-Hashimi was murdered by those who would deny the Iraqi people the democratic, prosperous future they so richly deserve. The best service that we can render her memory is to defeat the terrorists and to ensure that her vision of a peaceful, free Iraq prevails.

Of course, we owe this service to all those who have fallen in the cause of peace in Iraq. Sergio Vieira de Mello and the United Nations personnel who were killed or injured in the blast in Baghdad on 19 August were committed to bringing the ideals of the United Nations to the people of Iraq. They paid the ultimate sacrifice for their dedication. We mourn their loss, but we will not weaken in our resolve to help the Iraqi people rebuild their country on the principles of justice and security.

What, I think, makes Iraq so important was the way in which it tested the role and purpose of this institution over more than a dozen years. Throughout that period, the international community remained in agreement that the regime of Saddam Hussein posed a Chapter VII threat to international peace and security by its proliferation of weapons of mass destruction programmes and its unparalleled defiance of the will of the United Nations. Yet, earlier this year, sadly, we divided on when and what action was necessary to deal with the Iraqi threat.

Of course, I acknowledge the controversy over the military action which the United Kingdom, the United States and others took and the heavy responsibilities we now bear, but I firmly believe that the decisions we took were the right ones. The authority of the United Nations was at stake. Having given Saddam Hussein's regime a final opportunity to comply with the United Nations, what would have happened if we had simply turned away? Would the world be a safer place today? Would Iraq be a better place today? Would the United Nations be a stronger institution today? The answer to each of those questions is no. Saddam Hussein would have been emboldened by our failure to act; every dictator would have been encouraged to follow his example; and the authority of this United Nations would have been gravely weakened.

Yet, whatever the arguments of the spring, we have now to come together again for a common purpose. As the Security Council has recognized in its three resolutions 1472 (2003), 1483 (2003) and 1500 (2003), we have a shared interest in helping Iraqi citizens to embrace the rights and freedoms which they have been denied so long and for which this institution was founded. Yes, the security situation does present formidable challenges. Terrorists who despise freedom are seeking to plunge Iraq into chaos. They have inflicted terrible blows on the Iraqi people, coalition soldiers and international aid workers, but ultimately they will fail.

And let us also not lose sight of what has been achieved and what is taking shape. Saddam Hussein's reign of terror is over. The apparatus of torture and oppression which claimed hundreds of thousands of

lives is at an end. Instead, we have the beginnings of a representative Government run by Iraqis for Iraqis; new ministries providing daily services to the people; a free press; the freedom for members of all religious communities to worship as they wish; hospitals and schools in operation; bustling traffic on the streets and highways; and a start to real economic regeneration.

We shall stay in Iraq as long, but only as long, as it is necessary to meet our clear responsibilities and to restore sovereignty to the Iraqi people as quickly as we can in an orderly manner. I hope very much that we can agree a new Security Council resolution to strengthen the United Nations role in Iraq. In managing this transition, we should be guided by three central principles: first, the transfer of powers must reflect realities on the ground in Iraq, particularly the need to ensure security; secondly, the Iraqi institutions must be sufficiently robust to take on increasing responsibilities; and thirdly, the exercise of executive powers and responsibilities must be based on good governance, involving representative Iraqi authorities and coherent constitutional arrangements. In other words, the timetable should be driven by the needs of the Iraqi people and their capacity progressively to assume democratic control, rather than by fixing arbitrary deadlines.

Iraq is, sadly, not the only territory in the Middle East where the international community faces great challenges. Three months ago, we all had high hopes about the work of the Quartet of the United Nations, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United States in Israel and the occupied territories. It is tragic that these hopes were blown apart on 19 August by the terrorist atrocity in Jerusalem, which came only a few hours after the terrorist atrocity against the United Nations in Baghdad, but the international community has to stay united on both the means and the ends in the Middle East. There are no alternatives to the road map and there can be no alternatives to the outcome the entire world wishes to see — two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. This can be the only fitting memorial to the thousands who have died on both sides since the beginning of this appalling conflict.

The breadth of the issues being tackled by the United Nations and its agencies demonstrates the continued relevance of this institution. The Counter-Terrorism Committee has given the United Nations a focus for its work following 11 September two years ago, but we must now build upon that work, giving the Committee the expertise and the remit to reinforce the capacity of Member States to tackle and to overcome terrorism.

We also know that proliferation is one of the greatest threats we face alongside terrorism. Much good work on proliferation is being done by United Nations agencies, particularly the International Atomic Energy Agency, but it is extraordinary that the Security Council itself has not addressed the issue of proliferation for over 10 years. In our judgement, it is time that it did.

Problems of internal conflict, on the other hand, are regularly on the Security Council's agenda. The United Nations has unrivalled expertise and experience in this area and has achieved great things in countries as far apart as East Timor and Sierra Leone, but nation-building is a collaborative effort, requiring the resources and commitment of Member States if the United Nations peace-building is to be effective. We therefore need new mechanisms to help prevent conflicts and then to help States before they collapse.

We must also make a real success of the Millennium Declaration. We have to overcome the setback of Cancún and secure a positive outcome to the Doha Round.

These and other shared problems require collective responses, as our Secretary-General so eloquently said here in his speech on Tuesday. A key to this is to ensure that the United Nations itself remains an effective global forum capable of delivering results. The Secretary-General posed some difficult questions two days ago. I welcome his initiative to seek the advice of a distinguished group to make proposals on reform. I welcome, too, his parallel commitment to modernizing the United Nations and its agencies.

For our part, the United Kingdom is committed to making the Security Council more representative. The issue is not whether but how to do this. A bigger and more representative Council, however, will not of itself make it easier to make the tough choices which it has to face so often. The most important ingredient is the political will and determination of the members of the Council to take effective action.

The most important part of the Secretary-General's speech on Tuesday was about the choices now confronting the United Nations. He was right about those. We have indeed come to a fork in the road.

Down one route lies a world in which the United Nations strengthens its role as the collective instrument for protecting our peace and security; down the other route lies a world in which collective action becomes a synonym for "inaction". We must not take this second route. The Secretary-General's speech was a challenge to all of us. We all share a world in which international terrorists strike down the innocent, regardless of faith or nationality, and we are all less secure when weapons of mass destruction are in reckless hands. We do not have the luxury simply of rejecting unilateralism, while proposing no multilateral means of confronting and dealing with these threats.

The British Government is profoundly committed, as it always has been, to the ideals of the United Nations. To us, the importance of this Organization has always been its ability to put those high ideals into effect. We will work wholeheartedly with the Secretary-General and the international community to ensure that the United Nations retains and strengthens both its idealism and its effectiveness.

The President: I now call His Excellency Mr. Jan Karlsson, Minister for Development Cooperation, Migration and Asylum Policy and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Mr. Karlsson (Sweden): In the early morning of 11 September 2003, our Foreign Minister Anna Lindh died, murdered in a senseless crime. One of Sweden's most prominent and respected leaders is gone. We have lost a part of our future. She spoke for the oppressed, for the victims of human rights violations. She worked for international peace and justice and for multilateral cooperation. The voice of Anna Lindh has been silenced, but her burning conviction echoes with us.

We meet at a time when the United Nations is facing difficulties and doubts. The capability of the United Nations has often been in question. Despite crises and shortcomings, the United Nations has always withstood these tests. The United Nations was indispensable in 1945 and it still is.

Global security cannot be achieved by unilateral action. Locking ourselves in will not bring peace, development, democracy or respect for human rights. We must work together to define and address emerging challenges for multilateral solutions.

The Secretary-General recently said:

> "We can no longer take it for granted that our multilateral institutions are strong enough to cope with all the challenges facing them". (*A/58/323, para. 4*)

I welcome Kofi Annan's challenge to us. The Nordic countries stand behind him. The United Nations and we, the Member States, must adapt. Reform is necessary to stay modern, responsive and efficient and to retain the trust of global civil society. International solidarity must be in focus when redefining our common agenda. Attaining the goals of the Millennium Declaration is a shared responsibility.

The legitimacy and authority of the Security Council must be regained. Its composition must better reflect the world of today. I believe that an agreement on enlargement with a number of non-permanent members could be reached fairly quickly, without excluding the possibility of additional permanent members at a later stage.

We welcome the Secretary-General's intention of establishing a high-level panel to consider threats to our security and the institutional reforms required for the United Nations to respond.

North Korea has withdrawn from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and remains unclear about its intentions. The nuclear programme in Iran, the possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan, and Israel's refusal to sign the NPT continue to cause concern. In several countries, nuclear weapons are accorded a growing importance in military doctrines. Discussions in the United States about the creation of a new generation of smaller nuclear arms are worrying to us. Such weapons would not contribute to a safer world, but risk lowering the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons.

The threats from weapons of mass destruction can only be met by multilateral efforts. The negative arms spiral must be reversed. The non-proliferation Treaty must be universally complied with. Sweden continues to work for this goal, together with its partners in the New Agenda Coalition.

We need new ideas on disarmament and non-proliferation and on how to strengthen existing regimes. To this aim, Sweden has initiated an independent, international commission chaired by Mr. Hans Blix. Last June, the General Assembly adopted a forward-looking resolution on the prevention of armed

conflict. Sweden will continue to work for a strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations practical preventive work.

Our focus must be the security of the individual. Violations of human rights can never be accepted. State sovereignty also implies responsibility. If Governments fail to protect their people, the international community must be prepared to act. In its report *The Responsibility to Protect*, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty points out important issues for the international community to take on. How can we make sure that sovereignty and independence never become a license to abuse people? How should the international community live up to its responsibility when States fail to protect their people?

We must make full use of instruments available to avoid war. The Security Council must be ready to act on early warning signals on threats of mass violations of human rights. Mechanisms to prevent such situations may be intrusive in character and need to be strengthened based on accountability and international law. As the Secretary-General said in his speech on Tuesday, the Security Council needs seriously to discuss the best way to respond to threats of genocide or other comparable massive violations of human rights. Prevention of genocide will be the topic for the Stockholm International Forum to be held in my country in January.

There must be an end to impunity. The International Criminal Court is now operational. The Court will act as a deterrent to perpetrators and a universal and equal tool for justice.

Two years ago, Foreign Minister Anna Lindh was accompanied to the General Assembly by her then 11-year-old son David. When he entered the Hall, he asked: "Mom, where are all the women?" He saw what many of us seem blind to. There are too few women here, as in very many decision-making bodies around the world. Gender equality is about making use of all human resources.

Women are strong, but they are made vulnerable through legal, economic and social discrimination. Women are made victims of violence in war, of abuse at home, of trafficking, of sexual exploitation. For these women, gender equality is a question of life and death. Women's equal rights to education, to a professional career and to participate in politics are not a threat to us men. The absence of these rights is a threat to the progress of mankind.

Peace operations require joint efforts to be successful. The cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the recent experience in the Democratic Republic of Congo — President Kabila's discussion of which the other day we listened to very carefully — the European Union-led police mission in the Western Balkans and the military operation in Macedonia, are all examples of this. We will continue developing the cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union and welcome the political declaration on crisis management.

Many painful lessons can be drawn from the violent conflicts in West Africa. Sweden welcomes the large and broadly based United Nations peacekeeping Mission in Liberia. The international community must support the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States in finding sustainable solutions for the entire region. The European Union is trying to strengthen such a partnership through the work of Hans Dahlgren, its Special Representative to the Mano River Union countries.

Women are crucial to peace and reconciliation. I welcome the fact that gender perspectives are now being incorporated into mandates and activities of all peacekeeping missions. The number of women in peace operations at all levels should increase. The implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the strengthening of the United Nations capacity in this field are vital.

The decision to cut poverty by half by 2015 is imperative, but we are not doing well enough. The pace at which the goal is being realized is far too slow. We now need new financial mechanisms and partnerships. In this spirit, we welcome the initiative presented a few days ago by the President of Brazil.

Official development assistance needs to treble. In Monterrey, the States members of the European Union agreed to increase official development assistance. Sweden is increasing its assistance to 0.86 per cent of its gross domestic product next year. Pledges must be followed by real cash money. We need to give the United Nations predictable, long-term financing. I entirely agree with what President Chirac said a few days ago: "Failing that, we will end up with a pick-and-choose United Nations". (*A/58/PV.7*)

The main responsibility for development is borne by every country itself in promoting democracy, good governance and respect of human rights. Official development assistance will always only be supplementary, as we all know. More important is the promotion of open and fair trade rules, the dismantling of tariffs and the reduction of subsidies. We expect the developed countries to show the way and to bring forward the Doha Development Agenda. Indeed, we must all see to it that the setback in the trade negotiations in Cancún is turned into a new start.

The Swedish Government presented a new bill in May this year on a coherent policy for global development. This is our way of translating the Millennium Declaration into national policy. We will put particular emphasis on the commitment to the eighth Millennium Development Goal, which is specifically about the obligations of the rich countries.

The consequences of climate change affect us all. The deterioration of the Kyoto Protocol must be halted.

We need a global system for migration that protects immigrant's rights and provides security for people who cross borders to study, research or work. Sweden and Switzerland support the Secretary-General in wishing to strengthen the role of migration on the United Nations agenda, including the establishment of a global commission on migration and development.

The General Assembly has rightly condemned the Israeli decision to deport President Arafat. Both parties must implement their obligations in accordance with the road map. We urge the Palestinian Authority to take action to cease the suicide bombings. Israel's extrajudicial killings are contradictory to international law and must be stopped immediately.

The international community must do its utmost to assist the parties in the peace process. The road map, as Jack Straw pointed out only a few minutes ago, should be implemented immediately with a view to the establishment of a peaceful and democratic Palestinian State in 2005. International monitors and observers should be sent to the area and Sweden is willing to take part in such a monitoring mechanism.

Sergio Vieira de Mello and many of his colleagues lost their lives in the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad about a month ago, a terrible loss for the international community. Sergio Vieira de Mello personified, better than most, the strength and commitment of the international community at its best.

The situation in Iraq remains volatile and dangerous. We are concerned about the security of the Iraqi people and of those who are in Iraq to ease their suffering. The bombing in Baghdad was aimed at the purposes that the United Nations stands for — to maintain international peace and security. It will not make us waiver. The United Nations will stay in Iraq. The international community needs the legitimacy of the United Nations as the only authority to be derived from in helping the Iraqi people recover self-government and rebuild their country. The handling of the conflict must remain an exception and not become a rule.

The future of the United Nations now lies in the hands of the Member States. If the United Nations fails, we all fail. In the statements most referred to so far in this year's debate, the media have competed in finding differences and disputes, but there is one thing that we all agree on. That is the belief in our United Nations. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has the world behind him.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.12

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Thursday, 25 September 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Alfred Moisiu, President of the Republic of Albania

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Alfred Moisiu, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alfred Moisiu, the President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moisiu (*spoke in Albanian; English text furnished by the delegation*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I am fully convinced that, under your leadership, the proceedings of this session will be crowned with success.

It is only right that, in addressing the present audience, my first thought should go to Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Iraq. From this rostrum, I wish to pay homage to his activity and contribution and to express profound sadness over the loss of his and other human lives in the cruel terrorist attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad.

This session is convening at the end of a year full of challenges and achievements for the international community, and certainly for the United Nations. We believe that the United Nations has identified the maintenance of peace, security and international stability and the protection of human rights as the fundamental objectives of its activity. This is best reflected in the Millennium Declaration, which outlines the common vision for building a better world without conflict or poverty. We share the opinion of Secretary-General Kofi Annan that the major changes that occurred across the world following the events of 11 September 2003, the phenomenon of international terrorism and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have emphasized the need to address the major challenges of our times from a new perspective and, in this context, to further improve the performance of the United Nations structures.

In this spirit, Albania did not hesitate to join the United States-led coalition against international terrorism. Albania has signed 12 international conventions and protocols in the war against terrorism. It is working closely with its neighbours, other countries at large and international bodies with a view to eradicating the potential sources of various forms of terrorism.

We underscore the need for vigilance, coordination and reaction in the face of the threats currently posed by weapons of mass destruction. These weapons — be they chemical, biological or nuclear — are even more dangerous in the hands of terrorists. At the same time, we are actively participating in the peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

03-53139 (E)

as in Bosnia and Georgia, as a demonstration of our will and commitment to the war on terror and to efforts to secure peace and security. We consider that deep-rooted democratic changes are important for both Afghanistan and Iraq. It is our conviction that the ability to live in freedom, despite the difficulties of transition, marks a point of no return on the journey away from dictatorship and from the terror that threatens others as well.

Albanian politics and society have adopted a unified approach towards Euro-Atlantic integration, which is one of our major priorities. Consistent with our vital interests, the integration process has all popular support. We regard this not merely as a mechanical affiliation to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but as adherence to the standards and values of freedom, democracy and the free market. Given the brief period since the onset of these changes and the negative heritage of the past, we must recognize that Albania has made important and substantial achievements on the road of democracy, but this is no reason for complacency.

We are aware that it will take far greater effort to move the initiated reforms forward, especially in the realm of the judiciary, the economy and the fight against crime and corruption, the latter having afflicted post-communist societies in general. We are already in the process of negotiation on the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. The Thessaloniki summit once again confirmed the open-door policy to be pursued towards Albania and the other four countries of the Western Balkans. Significant positive steps have also been taken concerning the NATO membership process, specifically following the Prague summit. The commitment of Albania, Croatia and Macedonia under the Adriatic 3 Charter will bring them closer to membership standards. We maintain that our convergence towards the standards of NATO and the European Union today and our full-fledged membership tomorrow will benefit the countries of our region, just as it will benefit Europe itself and overall peace and security.

Albania considers regional cooperation to be a prerequisite and encouragement for Euro-Atlantic integration. We believe that the pursuit of dialogue, as well as enhanced cooperation and understanding among the Balkan countries, deeply reflect the aspirations of our citizens and impart a fresh impulse to the integrating processes. The Balkans, which not long ago were known as a source of conflicts and crises, now reveal a different picture that has changed in a positive way, with a significantly moderated political climate prevailing in the area. The region of former nationalistic clashes has turned into an area in which the culture of dialogue and good understanding is putting down roots. Although the supporters of the divisive and tragic past are still active in politics, overall the new political class in the Balkans is looking forward to the future and cooperation.

Albania and the Albanians are playing an active role in building and strengthening this new spirit. We want and are working to ensure that we establish friendly relations of cooperation with all the countries in the region, so that we can move ahead towards our common European future. The investment our countries are making in a Euro-Atlantic future is one of the principal guarantees that the region will free itself from the bitter past and join the democratic flow of our times.

Albania and the Balkans attach special importance to the enhancement of stability and the reinforcement of democracy in the areas formerly known as hotbeds. We appreciate the democratic and integrating developments in Kosovo, which do credit to the contribution of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner. We support the new mission under the leadership of Mr. Holkeri and admire the performance of society and institutions in Kosovo towards building a democratic model of coexistence among its citizens.

Stability in Kosovo is very important for stability in the region. That is why we have consistently bolstered the reforms and the achievements made with regard to the establishment and strengthening of the democratic institutions there. We have denounced acts of violence and have encouraged every initiative that helps to ensure respect for the norms of a democratic society, enforce the rule of law, promote a sustained and developed market economy, build democratic institutions, maintain inter-ethnic harmony and facilitate the return of displaced persons.

Albania has urged and supported the efforts to start a dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on mutually beneficial technical issues. We claim that the pursuit of dialogue is the best way to address problems and to create the necessary trust. Albania is of the opinion that the future of Kosovo, and hence its final

status, is an issue that ought to be decided at a later stage, which should not be postponed indefinitely.

It is already widely recognized that this status will be determined through the will of the citizens of Kosovo in cooperation with the international community. Compliance with the required standards and determination of status are closely related and interdependent issues. The standards ensure the normal functioning of the local institutions, while the status brings about stability, peace and development in Kosovo and the region.

The positive developments in Macedonia also give rise to hope for the achievement of lasting stability. We maintain, however, that the integral implementation of the Ohrid Agreement without delay is of crucial importance to the future of Macedonia. Albania denounces the extremists on all sides and abides by the spirit of tolerance and inter-ethnic coexistence.

The Republic of Albania supports the plans and initiatives aimed at providing a comprehensive and lasting solution to the situation in the Middle East. In that context, we consider the road map to be the way towards the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Before reaching that settlement, however, violence and terrorist acts should be renounced forever. Dialogue and the spirit of agreement should be promoted until an enforceable final solution is found. We believe that peace in the Middle East is an important pillar for peace and security the world over. The settlement of the Palestinian issue is essential for the resolution of the crisis in the Middle East and a core element for success in the fight against terrorism.

The Albanian State values and believes in an even greater role of the United Nations in the strengthening of peace, security and economic and social development throughout the world. Albania supports reform to make the United Nations an ever stronger organization, capable of coping with the challenges of the present and providing timely solutions to issues of concern to all its Members. In that respect, we welcome the objectives the Secretary-General has set for the reform of the Organization as a whole and for its specific organs, including the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm Albania's commitment to fulfilling its obligations stemming from the decisions to be taken during the present session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alfred Moisiu, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jagdeo: It is a great pleasure for me to address the General Assembly under the presidency of a fellow citizen of our Caribbean Community. Allow me to extend our warmest congratulations and good wishes to you, Sir, as you discharge the functions of your high office.

I offer our esteemed Secretary-General our appreciation for his astute and steadfast leadership in these times of great challenge to the Organization. I would also like to pay tribute to his dedicated staff, many of whom have lost their lives in service to the United Nations.

In 1953, the people of Guyana were allowed for the first time to exercise their democratic franchise under universal adult suffrage to elect the Government of their choice. Today, 50 years later, my country has learned, through the painful experience of misrule and mismanagement, the vital importance of democracy to our future as a nation. We recognize that to foster development, reduce poverty and safeguard human dignity, democracy must be allowed to grow and take root. Having laid the basic foundation for good governance through free and fair elections, we now face the task of building a more prosperous and just society.

To that end, my Government has embarked on a process of consultation and collaboration with all sectors of our population, including political parties, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Through the recent reform of the Constitution, provisions have been made to enhance fiscal transparency, provide greater inclusiveness and guarantee the fundamental rights of our people. Those measures include six independent commissions on human rights, ethnic relations, women and gender equity, indigenous peoples, the rights of the child and public procurement.

Moreover, in an effort to foster greater social cohesion in Guyana, we recently invited the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Racism to visit and engage the various sectors of Guyanese society so that the international community can be informed of the broad perspectives of our multicultural society and of the several measures which the Government has put in place to promote interracial harmony.

In further consolidation of the democratic process, my Government has embarked upon a programme to reform the justice and security systems in our society by building capacity for the prevention, investigation and resolution of crime and for the improvement of the administration of justice. Much has been accomplished in that area, but much more remains to be done.

At the same time, we have taken several development initiatives that will ultimately lead to a better life for all our people. Among them are the national development strategy and the poverty reduction strategy. We have worked hard to provide better housing, health and education facilities for our people and have managed to make signal progress in reducing poverty. And by stimulating investment, we are creating new opportunities for development. We now look to the future with the renewed hope that we will be able to overcome the many challenges to our political, economic and social progress.

However, in the face of a persistent debt burden, drastically reduced development assistance and ever present protectionist barriers, and in the prevailing climate of international tension and uncertainty, many developing countries, Guyana included, are made more vulnerable, and prospects for growth are severely impaired. The failure of the recently concluded Cancún Conference does not make us sanguine about the future. The international community is now hardly likely to reach the Millennium Declaration targets that were set by this Assembly three years ago.

The fate of nations, especially of those as small as ours, lies not in our hands alone. The process of globalization has made us acutely aware of the need for greater interdependence and international cooperation if we are to survive the many threats to our welfare. That interdependence is the basis for multilateralism and for the United Nations.

The Charter of the Organization reflects our collective commitment to cooperate to promote peace and development. However, we have yet to fully honour that commitment. Regrettably, the world in which we live now, while placing a high premium on democracy at the national level, fails to live up to that ideal in the international councils that shape our common destiny. We are concerned at that double standard, as the aspirations of humankind for peace, security and development cannot be fulfilled without the effective participation of all States in global affairs.

Especially disconcerting is the practice by some countries and international financial institutions to rely on anecdotal or partial information — often from questionable sources — to assess the performance of a given country. Needless to say, that can be very damaging to the particular economy concerned, as it effectively deters further aid and investment. Similarly, we are concerned by the inordinate delay in the release of development funds. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, which was conceived as a means of assisting seriously indebted poor countries, has been unconscionably delayed. Meanwhile, the poor of our countries must face continuing hardship and suffering. They cannot be held hostage for much longer.

The success of international cooperation, and indeed of the United Nations system, will be determined by how well they respond to the interests and concerns of not only the powerful but also the powerless, and not only of the rich but, most urgently, of the poor. If truth be told, their record thus far leaves much to be desired. It is therefore imperative that a credible and effective system of global governance be established as quickly as possible. That will require a more fundamental reform of the United Nations, and indeed of the entire multilateral system, than we have seen so far.

After several crises in the decade of the 1990s, there was a strong call for reform of the international

financial architecture to provide greater macroeconomic stability. The urgency of the campaign appears to have diminished, however, even though the threat of further calamity remains. Attempts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the development process now lag behind, denying our countries a greater say in the decision-making process pertaining to issues that affect our welfare. Nor have we been able to develop an effective security system to protect countries, particularly the weak and small, from encroachments on their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Our world continues to be subject to a wide array of threats to international peace and security. We recently witnessed a series of terrible human tragedies. Many thousands have died as a result. If there is one lesson to be learned, it is that violence accomplishes nothing. Only through dialogue and negotiation, bolstered by social justice, can lasting solutions to those problems be found. It is therefore imperative that the United Nations, the multilateral Organization to which we all belong, be strengthened to effectively promote peace and development.

It is time that the United Nations Security Council, which has the primary responsibility under the Charter for international peace and security, be made more representative of the wider international community. The Council must be expanded, and the role of developing countries in that body appropriately strengthened. To that end, Guyana is prepared to support the candidacies of Brazil, India and an African country for permanent seats on the Council, as well as a suitable number of non-permanent seats for other developing countries. That expansion will no doubt enable it to better cope with the challenges that conflicts, both old and new, pose to global peace and development.

Neither the many speeches that we make nor the several strategies that we occasionally devise in the hope of building global peace and development will ever accomplish much unless they are followed up by appropriate action. Sad to say, our frequent declarations of intent are not matched by deeds, a failure that can be explained only by the lack of serious purpose on the part of many Member States. We have yet to transcend selfish national interests to reach a higher plane of interdependence and multilateralism. I urge the international community to rethink its policies and to seriously consider the advantages of a more balanced and equitable system of relations.

The world in which we now live calls for greater international solidarity and cooperation, not less. We must therefore ensure that those ideals are at the forefront of our deliberations at the General Assembly and that we take practical steps to ensure and strengthen our common home, the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Ravalomanana (*spoke in French*): The United Nations is at a crossroads. The fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly is taking place at a critical time in the history of the Organization. However, that moment could also be decisive for the future of the Organization. Recent developments on the international scene represent a call to action that compels us to review its organization and rules so that it may serve all nations.

Your election, Mr. President, to the presidency of the principal body of the United Nations will contribute to the achievement of those objectives. I would also like to pay tribute to Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan for his dedication to the cause of international peace and security and for his ongoing desire to achieve the common good of mankind.

International peace and security continue to be dangerously precarious as internal conflicts and confrontations between States proliferate in many regions of the world. We believe that the refusal to

implement obligations imposed upon States under international law and the violation of the provisions of the Charter are two areas of grave concern to us. Never since its creation has the Organization been confronted with so many situations and divergent views seriously threatening the attainment of its goals. Unity and cohesion among the members of the Security Council are essential in order to strengthen the credibility of the United Nations and the confidence of Member States and to ensure that organ's effectiveness, as it is the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Win Aung (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let me mention the struggle against terrorism, which no longer hesitates to attack our Organization. On this issue, Madagascar is truly at one with the international community in its struggle against that scourge. Accordingly, we have ratified the 12 existing international conventions to combat terrorism. We take this opportunity to pay heartfelt tribute to the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, our Representative in Iraq.

The creativity and courage of our Secretary-General in shouldering his responsibilities and commitments to peace and security, in a spirit of solidarity, deserve the support of all. We endorse the recommendations contained in his report aimed at strengthening the United Nations. We hope to see changes in our Organization that would place greater emphasis on the importance of the General Assembly as the principal deliberative and decision-making organ and on rendering the Security Council more representative and more transparent.

Such reforms are necessary in order to protect the sovereignty of smaller nations. They are indispensable, for the common interests of the peoples of the world should have no platform other than the General Assembly. We support the proposals made by Mr. Couchepin, President of the Swiss Federation, to forge a new vision of security by increasingly involving individuals in the deliberative process.

A strong United Nations will be able to find solutions for integrating economic and social questions into the framework of the peace and security of peoples.

The economic and social situation in the world remains a source of great concern. The beneficial impact of global economic growth has circumvented our island, as it has done with other countries in Africa. In the course of this past decade, major United Nations conferences have pinpointed strategies and established objectives to achieve sustainable human development. But we still need to mobilize the necessary resources to implement, together, the declarations we all adopted — declarations which kindled so much hope in our peoples, who are languishing in dire poverty.

The Millennium Declaration set deadlines for a number of common objectives for all Member States. Such goals are achievable, but they remain to be attained. The new form of international cooperation based on partnerships between the public and private sectors offers us this opportunity, particularly since this is a mutually advantageous relationship.

The Economic and Social Council, in the Declaration it adopted on 2 July last, emphasizes the importance of partnerships at the national and international levels with a view to promoting cooperation among various sectors. The Economic and Social Council solemnly committed itself to facilitating and supporting the creation of alliances between Governments, donors, non-governmental organizations, civil society, decentralized communities and the private sector in order to promote integrated rural development. Our country is very pleased at having been elected to preside over the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development and at having been chosen as the first pilot country.

Madagascar, like most African countries, has not benefited from the world economic expansion. More than 70 per cent of the population of Madagascar still lives below the poverty line. Fifty per cent of the population has no access to drinking water, and, as a result, 50,000 children die annually. I am not going to pass judgement here, but I an convinced that a fundamental dilemma exists: the past does not loom as large in other parts of the world as it does in Africa. In Africa, the past is part and parcel of the structure of society and of people's mindsets.

At the same time, we are confronted with the challenges of the policies, values, economic trends and technology of the twenty-first century. Africa is suffering from major gaps in this respect, more than other continents. To bridge such gaps is not an easy process. Whatever the case may be, Africa must take up the challenges of the future and undertake the

implementation of good governance and of a rapid and sustainable economic development.

Today's Madagascar is a different country. It is aiming to establish a true democracy based on the rule of law and on respect for international law. Good governance, the rule of law, the combat against corruption, decentralization, participation of the population and the support of the private sector are its pillars. Restoring the confidence of economic players, establishing conducive and secure conditions for business and sharing responsibilities are key, with the State playing the role of facilitator. These are the main underpinnings of our economic activities.

Let us not forget that the key to success is the right approach. In order to encourage investments, various laws have been enacted in order to reduce import taxes and duties on capital goods. At present foreign investors can own real estate.

Furthermore, agreements to protect investments have been signed or are being prepared. We are extremely grateful for the efforts undertaken by national and international donors. Personally speaking, I know that it is not easy to collect the necessary funds for poor countries when the world economy itself is showing signs of weakness.

I am convinced that the efforts of African countries designed to improve their cooperation in the context of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Indian Ocean Rim and other organizations will lead to the expected results.

But this is not enough. Madagascar is opening up, and I dare to hope that other countries will also follow suit. But the world itself is not opening up, as was seen at Cancún. Why then can we not use as an example the European expansion process? This may be difficult and costly, but the outcome is promising and the procedures are already known.

Will the international community and the African countries find a common vision for the future of Africa? Personally, I believe that it is high time that the major Powers took steps towards a more equitable partnership. We receive credits, grants, experts and programmes, but what do we read in the international press every day? That Africa is a forgotten continent. Unfortunately, this is true. We are far away from the strategic spheres of the think tanks, of the heads of State of the major Powers, and of the chief executive officers of large corporations. In other words, Africa remains the victim of marginalization.

Does the international community have confidence in the future of Africa? Is it not true that it is urgent to develop a different outlook for our continent?

We have this confidence. Our objectives are clear, but our capacities are still low. We need assistance in the area of capacity enhancement in order to attain the objectives we have set for ourselves. We are ready to work tirelessly; we are ready for change, ready for openness. However, we would like to have more support, greater openness and especially a different outlook and a new vision for our own continent in this concert of nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Colonel Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Colonel Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Colonel Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Assoumani (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure for me to join with others who have spoken before me in congratulating, on behalf of my country, the Union of the Comoros, and on my own behalf, Mr. Julian Hunte on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We are convinced that, given his wisdom and extensive experience, he will guide our work to a successful

outcome. I am very pleased to assure him of the full cooperation and support of my entire delegation.

I would also like to express appreciation for the openness demonstrated by his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, throughout the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, over which he presided with the skill and farsightedness that we all know so well.

I also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedication to this global Organization — a sentiment that I am sure is shared by all nations.

It goes without saying that the challenges before us are great, as many changes are taking place in the world at an ever-increasing rate, requiring renewed commitment on the part of the United Nations, as well as a strengthening of its role. Unfortunately, every day we see evidence of the risks that such changes entail. In this context my country, the Union of the Comoros, joins those who have paid tribute to the memory of the United Nations staff members who fell as a result of the indiscriminate violence and terrorism in Baghdad, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Today more than ever, we should be concerned about the direction in which the world is heading. The world is characterized by violence, poverty and despair — despite the fact that science and technology have never been more advanced and wealth never more abundant. The division of the world into developed and developing countries does nothing to assuage our common fears and uncertainties.

It is true that the countries of the North are, increasingly, questioning themselves on the subject terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. But it must be recognized that the countries of the South, while asking themselves the same questions, are also labouring increasingly under the burden of debt, civil war, insecurity, poverty and endemic disease. The pursuit of security and harmony in the world therefore requires a sustained focus on all countries with a view to achieving a safer, more unified and more humane world.

Of course, as we see every day, terrorism, cowardly and indiscriminate, thrives in poverty and seeks to express itself through violence, exploiting the weakest links in the global chain. It respects no boundary, no race and no religion. As His Excellency George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, rightly said in his address to the General Assembly, the victims of terrorism are also to be found in Bali, Casablanca, Dar es Salaam, Mombassa, Nairobi and Baghdad. We must respond, therefore, so as to ensure that such borderless networks never gain any respite and so as to prevent cowardice from holding sway and destroying humanity.

In order to better combat this situation, we must bring terrorists to justice and commit ourselves resolutely to the long-term fight against terrorism itself. In order to do so, we must fight frustration and injustice and appeal for greater tolerance and for respect for the right to differ and for the right of every people to live in dignity.

In suppressing terrorism, however, we must guard against any tendency to strike a blow against human rights, and refrain from equating terrorism with certain religions or regions. Indeed, committing such a grave mistake could give rise to a vicious circle of hatred, vengeance and isolationism at the global level. My country is steadfastly committed to preventing and combating terrorism in all its forms, and we have set up the necessary institutional mechanisms to this end. We appeal for greater technical and logistical support from the international community to help us to be more successful in this fight.

All the countries of the world — those of the North and South alike — have a shared destiny. Countries and peoples cannot get along without each other. Solidarity is a necessity; complementarity is an obligation. But we must recognize and reaffirm that we cannot today truly talk about security in a world of poverty. We cannot talk about peace if we do not ensure the economic development and well-being of all peoples. Harmony and democracy cannot reign in the world if it is rife with inequalities and disparities that leave entire sectors of the global population in conditions of uncertainty, precariousness and oblivion.

We have, indeed, forgotten that humankind must be at the centre of all of our concerns. Unfortunately, the general feeling of uncertainty — the daily fear that all of us experience — vividly brings to mind the fact that, whatever the social status of particular individuals, humankind is vulnerable and people need each other in order to be reassured and to survive.

But the insecurity that causes so much anxiety throughout the world and makes it seem so fragile has

a number of different sources. We are entitled to ask, as we consider the current situation, if it was wise in the past to have brought together — almost by force — people of various nationalities, given that nothing was done to foster a common desire among them to live together.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that there are inter-ethnic problems and friction between nationalities in many States throughout the world, and that these are a source of instability and insecurity. That shows the seriousness of lack of respect for the differences and even the character of each people in the world's harmonious development.

Countries and peoples throughout the world are searching for their integrity, their sovereignty and their identity. Most often, of course, that generates threats to peace and security. The same causes produce the same effects everywhere. My country, the Union of the Comoros — today still a victim of its colonial past — is very eloquent testimony to that. But there are similar cases, particularly in China, in Morocco, in Palestine and in other regions. Under those conditions, the Comorian State is experiencing — as might be the case for any other country — all the difficulties of achieving real development in its desire to consolidate democracy.

Today, democracy and respect for human rights are requirements that must be respected by every country. It is universally established that democracy is the most appropriate remedy to overcome the pain of countries and of peoples. But it is also established that, whatever the remedy, the dose must be prescribed according to the patient's age and physical state, and obviously one must always bear in mind the possible side effects. So we must help every country to move at its own pace on the path of democracy, while bearing in mind each people's history and traditions.

The dialogue of cultures — openness towards the other — must be a permanent inspiration in the commitment to a peaceful and responsible international life. Multilateralism — which is the guarantee of participation by every nation in the world's progress — must be safeguarded and strengthened. Therefore, we support the proposals of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for a restructuring of the Organization so that it will be effective and can meet current challenges. In that way, the moral authority of the United Nations will be gradually restored and maintained. As for the Security Council — the body charged with maintaining peace and security — it must be reformed and its role must be fine-tuned. That is an essential condition for ensuring the success of its diverse missions.

In its development, the world — if it is to be harmonious and stable — must concern itself with and bear in mind the most vulnerable regions and the most disadvantaged countries. Among those, the small island States deserve particular attention so that we can bridge the development gap inherent to their geographical situation. Only economic development — and thus real solidarity between rich and poor countries — will guarantee stability and peace in the world. Thus will democracy and the rule of law be consolidated and strengthened.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development — an ambitious project conceived in Africa by Africans for Africans — must be a reality that is supported by and profitable for all. Debt — which is a true burden and is truly stifling developing economies — must be circumscribed and overcome to liberate the countries of the South and to give them the capacity for real involvement in global wealth creation. But, in order to support the survival and emergence of our economies, we must also put an end to agricultural product subsidies in the countries of the North and let the market have free reign. Our countries seek and need support so that they can emerge from economic marginalization. Our assets and our potential deserve to be valued. Our efforts must be encouraged.

My country, which believes in Africa's ability to take charge of itself, is facing its future with determination and responsibility. I do not believe it is useful to return to the ups and downs that have marked my country's historical development — particularly the past few years, characterized by a secessionist crisis with tragic consequences. Today, I welcome the new-found normality and the significant progress achieved. We owe that success to Comorian wisdom, to the national conscience and to the multiform assistance of all our bilateral and multilateral partners. Today, we must still establish the Assemblies. But the Comorians are convinced that only real economic development can guarantee national cohesion and ensure a secure future.

The international community's support is needed more than ever before. I thank our partner countries and organizations, particularly the Republic of South Africa and the African Union, which have always had

confidence in the Comorian people and stand by them in their resolve to achieve stability and well-being for every citizen. Together, we have an opportunity to guarantee a more just and more humane world. The international system's weaknesses, the blindness and the deafness, and the ill-fated and suicidal networks must be overcome, allowing the emergence of an international conscience, the guarantee of unity, peace and solidarity. The world needs each of us, every country and every difference, to guarantee its future. Let us commit ourselves, all together, with resolve and determination.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Colonel Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Compaore (*spoke in French*): The serious events currently threatening international peace and security — armed conflict, terrorism, poverty, disease and unfair trading practices — call urgently and firmly to mankind's conscience and, above all, to that of the world's leaders. Guided by this consideration, I come before this Assembly to share our common concerns with the other leaders of the world and to seek appropriate answers that will restore confidence and hope to humankind.

Given the importance of this gathering, the election of Mr. Hunte to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session in every way represents a tribute and a symbol of the honour being paid to a young and small nation, Saint Lucia. That honour is ours as well — the honour of small States, which see this consecration as a demonstration of the United Nations awareness of the concept of the sovereign equality of States.

We extend the same sentiments to Mr. Hunte's predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan.

We must recognize, however, that all of our expectations of this session will be chimerical if we do not fully support the activities of the Secretary-General. I therefore wish solemnly to congratulate Mr. Kofi Annan on his active commitment to the cause of peace and justice and to reaffirm our complete trust in him and our sincere encouragement. That is particularly true this year because our Organization was brutally tested and unfairly harmed by the heinous attack of 19 August on the United Nations office in Baghdad, which took the lives of a number of staff members, including that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello. Burkina Faso once again pays tribute to their memory.

The convulsions of our times — reflected in the increased hotbeds of crisis, the radicalization of international terrorism and organized crime, growing poverty and the proliferation of disease — convince us fully that international solidarity must remain active if we are to guarantee our world the stability and security it so desires. Indeed, despite the undeniable involvement and efforts of the United Nations; regional organizations, such as the African Union; and subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern Africa Development Community, the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa and the Community of Sahel and Saharan States, to name but a few, in the management and settlement of many conflicts; and despite a certain number of success stories, such as the restoration of peace in Angola, Sierra Leone and more generally in the Great Lakes region, the rolling wave of armed conflict, tension and instability threatens to become an ongoing phenomenon.

In Iraq, given the tragic turn of events, we feel that the Organization must once again be placed at the heart of the key responsibilities both in order to define a transitional political process free of any taint of colonialism and to rebuild the country.

In the Middle East, where the escalation of violence and the intransigence of the belligerents make us fear the worst every day, we believe that the road map offers an opportunity to emerge from this crisis. However, without an international body on the ground

to follow up and monitor events, no agreement on this major conflict can work.

We cannot fail to mention the situations in the Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, Sudan and the Horn of Africa. The very least that can be said about these conflicts is that they remain of concern, despite all the efforts that have been made to settle them. Clearly, given its history and geography, the political crisis in the Côte d'Ivoire is a major source of anxiety to us, particularly since the events of 19 September 2002. Above and beyond its incalculable consequences in terms of human lives lost, human rights violations and economic and financial damage, that serious crisis has demonstrated the extent to which we are so heavily interdependent in our subregion. This is yet another reason to hasten integration. We therefore deeply hope that the Côte d'Ivoire will return to lasting peace as soon as possible through the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

Just as worrisome is the tenacity with which terrorism harries and defies the international community, while using its own protean manifestations to evade the most impressive and sophisticated arsenals set up to contain it. Given the complexity of the phenomenon and the enormous obstacles to be overcome, the only valid activity is to make a collective response to what has become a threat to everyone. In this titanic struggle, it goes without saying that Burkina Faso is on the side of civilization against barbarism. It is pledged to this position, subscribing without hesitation to the anti-terror measures of the United Nations, particularly the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

However, while anathematizing terrorists of all stripes, we must recognize that one of the sources of such tragedy is the despair of certain peoples, the victims of intolerable frustration and injustice that are not being addressed quickly enough. That is why we must welcome the rejection by most countries in Cancún of the unfair trading practices that subsidize thousands of farmers of the North while preparing the certain deaths of millions of peasants of the South. It is also why our claims on behalf of African cotton growers will intensify as the market becomes ever more distorted. Considering that cotton production, which represents a tiny fraction of the economic activity of the industrialized countries, is a key element of the poverty reduction policies and a basic factor of the political and social stability of the States of Western and Central Africa, it is easy to take the full measure of the bias to which we are subject. What is true for cotton is just as true for most of the agricultural products of the developing countries. We must therefore work to redress such injustices.

The duty of solidarity in favour of development is a moral duty for the countries of the North. Such solidarity is an urgently-needed response to the destitution of our populations, especially since it addresses peoples more than Governments. This implies in no way that developing countries should be taken in charge, but that they should be helped to assume responsibility for their own futures. As for Africa, it has come to see that its salvation lies in endogenous development and has therefore decided to take its own destiny in hand. That is the raison d'être of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, to which the General Assembly is to devote a high-level debate in the near future.

It will be noted that I have a personal stake in the problems of development. I deeply believe that development through expanded job opportunities and the progressive elimination of poverty is a sine qua non of peace and thus of the very survival of humankind. This conviction led me to propose that, together with the International Labour Organization, the Organization of African Unity — and later the African Union — begin considering the issue of employment and the fight against poverty in Africa. A ministerial meeting was held in Ouagadougou in April 2002 on the issue in its many manifestations with respect to job growth as a means of defeating poverty in Africa.

Convinced that such thinking must be carried out at the highest level, the African Union at its Maputo summit decided to convene in Ouagadougou next year in 2004 a special summit of heads of State and Government on that very theme. For African leaders this will mean turning into specific and realistic programmes and strategies their commitments to create employment as a good way to combat poverty in Africa.

That meeting will be preceded by a civil society forum, through which employers and employees, non-governmental organizations, the African diaspora, institutions and development partners will make their contributions to our collective thinking.

Progress, independence and peace are intrinsic values of democracy. All nations and peoples are

working to meet that undeniable need. For more than a decade, Burkina Faso has been firmly rooted in the rule of law, oriented by political pluralism, good governance and the strength of institutions that guarantee human rights. We are pursuing this anchor of democracy, convinced that there is nothing more important at stake. This requirement should be true for everyone — peoples, nations and international organizations.

Thus, the long-sought reform of the United Nations, with the democratization of the institution, its structures and operations, the main goal, is becoming an imperative. It must give greater and better responsibilities to all nations, small and large, and avoid exclusion, such as those that have been against the Republic of China on Taiwan for 30 years. Nothing justifies keeping that country of 23 million inhabitants sidelined at the United Nations.

We are fully aware of the immensity and the complexity of the trials that disturb international life, but they are not insurmountable. Who could doubt that, despite such trials and pitfalls, the world could renew itself, if we were to agree to order our ambitions and efforts under the auspices of the United Nations? In that connection, Burkina Faso, a Sahelian country, aware of the continuing deterioration of the world ecological situation and its devastating affect on development, supports the idea of creating a specialized United Nations body for the environment presented by President Jacques Chirac at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, the clear awareness of what is at stake for the international community and, above all, the commitment we have undertaken to protect future generations from the scourge of war, hunger and illiteracy, are also factors that auger a more peaceful and equitable society. We believe that, in that sign of hope and perseverance, we should always and everywhere direct our action.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Pierre Charles, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Mr. Pierre Charles, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Pierre Charles, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Pierre Charles (Dominica): Allow me to start by congratulating you warmly, Mr. President, on your election to the high post of President of this respected global forum and to wish you success during your tenure. Your election to the post of President of the General Assembly is indeed an honour and a source of pride for all Saint Lucians, as well as for your brothers and sisters in the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Latin America.

Your presidency is, as such, a CARICOM-Latin American presidency, and your record of prudence and diplomatic skills will certainly be instrumental in meeting the lofty goals sought commonly by all of our nations and peoples.

I take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Jan Kavan, for the leadership he provided to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, a session that brought out clearly the many challenges confronting the United Nations in this decade.

The delegation of the Commonwealth of Dominica assures you of its full cooperation and support. Profound appreciation is also due to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts to make the United Nations more responsive and effective.

Over the last nine months, the relevance of the United Nations has become a burning issue worldwide. We must all appreciate that it remains the only universal multilateral institution with the capacity to address the complex set of global problems of the twenty-first century, ranging from peace and security to development.

Today's world is entangled in a web of complex problems that threaten global security. These problems, which require the urgent attention of the United Nations, include HIV/AIDS and other diseases, poverty, the marginalization of indigenous people, terrorism and global crime, the growing scarcity of freshwater, global warming, the spread of light arms, which threaten peaceful countries like Dominica, nuclear proliferation, armed civil conflicts and the refugees they give rise to, trafficking in humans and unfair trade rules that contribute to growing poverty in the developing countries.

All of these problems require a strong and effective multilateral organization, which enjoys the trust and confidence of the people on this planet and is capable of articulating collective approaches towards some solutions.

The world has changed considerably, yet present institutions for global governance — the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization — continue to operate on outdated political and economic foundations. The legitimacy, effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations continue to erode in the face of the "democratic deficit", which was an integral part of the original design but which needs to be remedied now.

The reform of the Security Council and the General Assembly is indispensable to the restoration of the moral authority lost because of failure to enforce resolutions. Effective governance, predicated on the principles of accountability and transparency to the people of the Member States, is a highly desirable objective that we must strive for.

I wish to reaffirm our country's total commitment to, and support for, the United Nations.

Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, other staff members of the United Nations and the citizens of Iraq who lost their lives or sustained injuries in the tragedy of Baghdad last August. We share the sorrow of the Secretary-General and his staff, and extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

The return of peace and stability to Iraq has now become the responsibility of all States members of the international community. If the international community must accept and shoulder this important responsibility, then we must commit to a greater role for the United Nations. We strongly hold the view that stability in Iraq is inextricably linked to the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqis, who must have sole responsibility for their future. The coalition forces must give a clear mandate to the United Nations for the creation of a multinational force, led of course by the main troop contributors, in order to ensure the security of Iraq.

While the attention of the international community is focused on restoring peace and security in Iraq, we cannot turn a blind eye to the breakdown in the Middle East peace process. My delegation supports the road map for peace in the Middle East and calls for the removal of the obstacles that have stalled the process. We embrace the two-State solution as the only mechanism for a lasting peace in the Middle East. The State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority must both commit to a ceasefire and return to the agreed obligations under the road map framework.

The fight against international terrorism remains a priority for Dominica given the horror of 11 September. In that regard, we have taken many steps to comply with the obligations of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). This year our Parliament enacted the Suppression of Financing of Terrorism Act, which complements two earlier pieces of legislation related to the prevention of terrorism, the Money Laundering Act and the Exchange of Information Act. The passage of these pieces of legislation has contributed to significant strengthening of the regulatory regime for banks operating in our offshore financial sector and to efforts to combat money-laundering.

We welcome the assistance of the Commonwealth in a review of our legal system to allow its alignment with the global strategy to fight terrorism, as well as the guidance of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

The numerous terrorist actions this year in Indonesia, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Iraq underscore the central importance of being vigilant and prepared to manage any crisis from a terrorist attack. We appeal to Member States to continue collaborative

efforts in this global fight to combat terrorism and to ensure that the capacities of small States are enhanced through transfer of intelligence information, surveillance technology and training in prevention strategies.

The United Nations International Year of Freshwater has helped the world community to focus attention on the millions of poor people who lack access to clean sources of water. Dominica is one of the islands in the Caribbean blessed with abundant freshwater resources, largely thanks to our high rainfall. Our experience with conserving our mountains and forests, which contribute to the maintenance of the water table, is one of the many experiences that our people are prepared to share with the world community.

Mankind faces a great challenge as growing scarcity of freshwater becomes a reality of this century. This is clearly an arena for constructive global action by the United Nations. Let us hope that concern for and attention to freshwater remain a core part of our continuing commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.

My delegation is indeed pleased at the tremendous progress made by the International Criminal Court over the last year. We have moved one step closer to punishing war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

This year is an important year for the Commonwealth of Dominica because we are celebrating the silver jubilee of our political independence, as well our twenty-fifth anniversary of our membership in the United Nations. Twenty-five years of nation-building has given us some experience in the global arena and allowed us to build a foundation for the next 25 years of national development.

As a peace-loving people, we highly value the right to self-determination and the full, fair and unhindered expression of the will of the people. We reaffirm our commitment to the rule of law, good governance at all levels and deepening of our longstanding democratic tradition.

Dominica and its sister islands of Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Jamaica are island nations adversely affected by the World Trade Organization (WTO) banana regime, which will bring to an end preferences and quotas for bananas exported to the European Union. The impending abolition of the banana quota at the end of 2005 has contributed immensely to an economic crisis in these Caribbean Community States. Thousands of small farmers in these island nations have lost hope and left banana production altogether. This has led to a 60 per cent decline in banana export earnings and has a negative impact on our national savings.

In Dominica, this situation has necessitated the implementation of an austerity program, in tandem with a standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund. We are, however, working assiduously to create the conditions for economic revitalization and transformation.

As we struggle to eradicate the mono-crop nature of our economy, a remaining vestige of the colonial period, we are determined to anchor our future economic foundation in the following areas: sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, ecotourism, information technology, financial services and water resource management. Our resolve to build a new economic order is based on our assertion of the principle of responsibility for our own development.

Our efforts at economic re-engineering urgently require a complement of new foreign direct investment, official development assistance (ODA) transfers, technology transfer and deepening of cooperation with Member States and global civil society. We remain hopeful that our donor partners will soon translate the ODA commitments that they made at Monterrey last year into action, since these commitments have become critical for economic reconstruction throughout the developing world.

Our call for special and differential treatment in the trade arena continues to resonate loudly. The outcome of the WTO meeting in Cancún was not encouraging. We join other developing nations in the call for an end or drastic reduction of agricultural subsidies in the developed world.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) for organizing the high-level plenary meeting with respect to the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, which took place on Monday, 22 September. This meeting will only be successful if it renews the resolve of Member States to accord a higher priority to national integrated efforts to fight the disease, which is exacting a toll on the youth and adult populations of African and Caribbean nations.

The Commonwealth of Dominica has developed a five-year plan of action to guide our efforts to manage the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and we are increasing our efforts to ensure a coordinated and participatory national response that involves schoolchildren, workers, the private sector and the voluntary sector.

I also wish to acknowledge the great initiative of President George W. Bush for the global fight against HIV/AIDS. It is a bold and assertive commitment that will contribute much-needed financial resources for the global campaign, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean. I also want to pay tribute to the tremendous efforts of UNAIDS, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization/Pan-American Health Organization in HIV/AIDS prevention. The programmes of these United Nations organizations deserve additional resources from Member States, international financial institutions, private foundations and transnational corporations if we are to expect higher levels of effectiveness and greater positive outcomes in HIV/AIDS prevention.

In 2004, the Decade of the World's Indigenous People will come to an end. The Decade was important in that it highlighted, for the first time since Columbus came to the Americas, the marginalization of the world's indigenous people. Although the Decade has fallen far short of expectations, it did have one positive outcome, namely, greater awareness on the part of the international community about the continuing plight of the indigenous peoples of the world. Dominica's indigenous people, the Caribs, made some important gains during the decade. These include the building of links with other indigenous groups across continents, the consolidation of a Caribbean grouping of indigenous organizations, and the Government's establishment of a Department of Carib Affairs.

Indigenous peoples around the world continue to face marginalization and to wallow in abject poverty. The world community must demonstrate greater responsiveness to improving their condition through more generous contributions to the Voluntary Fund.

We welcome the first report of the Secretary-General on the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and we are greatly encouraged by the number of African actions to institutionalize NEPAD along with the incremental steps towards alignment of United Nations activities with the priorities of NEPAD. We commend the African Union and the African nations for all the efforts towards strengthening the organization's momentum.

Dominica reiterates its continuing support for the efforts of our brothers and sisters in Africa to take full responsibility for their own development.

Next August, the international meeting for the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action regarding the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States will be held in Mauritius. This meeting will address the future of the world's small island developing States and will be a momentous occasion for Dominica and all the members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to finally get the much-needed international support to address the range of vulnerabilities we confront.

Dominica is honoured to host next week a meeting of sustainable development experts, who will assess the performance of the indicators of the Barbados Programme of Action. The Mauritius Conference is especially important given the marginalization of small island developing States by unfavourable World Trade Organization (WTO) trade rules and the trade liberalization process.

The international community must pay greater attention to the social and economic vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States. The sudden adjustment to trade liberalization and the WTO trade regime has contributed to the economic decline in many small island States. Averting the rapid descent into a downward economic spiral and social dislocation in SIDS requires a wider embrace and understanding of our call for special and differential treatment in the trade arena.

The Dominican delegation believes that we have an obligation to be responsible to future generations by ensuring that they will have an earth that is safe, secure and can sustain life. Let us not forget the commitments we made last year at the World Summit for Sustainable Development, especially regarding small island developing States. We reiterate our concern once again about all manifestations of climate change, and our opposition to continuing trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea.

We therefore call on all Member States to support and participate in the Mauritius Conference for the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action next

August. We also appeal to corporations, private foundations, bilateral and multilateral organizations to lend support for significant participation of civil society organizations, particularly from the AOSIS member States, at this conference.

The delegation of the Commonwealth of Dominica wishes once again to address the participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the work of the United Nations.

Taiwan has demonstrated its willingness to provide much needed assistance to countries around the world, including relief to war-torn and devastated countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Article 4 of the United Nations Charter invites all other peace-loving States to join the Organization and compels us to consider the participation of Taiwan's 23 million people.

The problem of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) ably demonstrated that progress towards the noble goals of the United Nations is only impeded by not integrating the Republic of China on Taiwan into international efforts to confront global challenges. The situation regarding the Republic of China must be addressed to ensure a more meaningful contribution to global peace, security and poverty eradication.

In conclusion, Dominica repeats its call for a new global framework to redress the imbalances brought about by the galloping forces of globalization. We urge the international community to rally behind the banner of multilateralism and to support the bold initiative of General Assembly President Julian Hunte to make development and its attendant components, poverty eradication and the Millennium Development Goals, the central focus of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

We call also for the leadership role of the United Nations in the quest for peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Iraq, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and for the unwavering support of the international community to the special needs of the small island developing States.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement just made.

The Honourable Pierre Charles, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic.

Mr. Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Makuza (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): This session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when the world is confronted with the most serious challenges of its history in all areas.

The Assembly has chosen Mr. Julian Hunte to preside over our work and for my delegation it is a sign of recognition of his qualities and competence. I would therefore like to join my voice to those of other distinguished heads of delegations preceding me in conveying to him my sincere congratulations as well as my hopes for his complete success, and we pledge to him the support of my country to assist him in accomplishing his task. We also wish to pay a tribute to his predecessor, whose success was tremendous in conducting the work of the fifty-seventh session, which has just ended. We ask him to accept our congratulations and our gratitude and we hope he will continue to impart to us the benefits of his experience.

We would also like to respectfully convey our thanks to the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for the wisdom that he has shown and for his tireless efforts which he continues to deploy, sometimes in extremely difficult situations, so that the Organization can, as much as possible, reach the objectives which have been assigned to it under the terms of its Charter.

During this fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, we are going to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the genocide which, in less than 100 days, from April to July 1994, in plain sight of the entire world, claimed the lives of more than a million Rwandans and caused the internal displacement or the exile of thousands of others. We hope that this will be

an occasion for the General Assembly to collectively recommit our efforts, as Governments and peoples across the globe, so that these types of horrors never again occur. Toward this end, we suggest that 7 April 2004 be declared, by this distinguished Assembly, as a day to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide.

While the advent of this sad anniversary obliges us to recall this genocide as something we must remember and as a sign of respect and of international solidarity, it is not the only reason we have taken the floor here. On the contrary, we wish to share an experience which is very hopeful, namely the rebirth of the Rwandan nation which, in our opinion, has been a test of stamina and of the determination of an entire people. In fact, in the last five months Rwanda, which in 1994 looked very much like a failed State, courageously undertook its reconstruction and now has experienced some promising events, the most promising of its post-colonial history.

Since its accession to independence in 1962, the first pluralist presidential elections have just been held and they took place in an atmosphere of unprecedented peace and calm. The stunning victory of His Excellency Paul Kagame as President of the Republic in the vote that was held on 25 August, exactly one month ago, is part of the democratic process set in motion since 1999 by local elections, followed in 2001 by municipal elections and in May 2003 by the constitutional referendum. This marks, de jure, the end of the transitional period, begun in the aftermath of the Rwandan tragedy in 1994.

These free and transparent elections, as well as the legislative elections which are ongoing even now as we speak, are not only an important step in the process of democratization, but also and especially are restoring Rwandans to their right and sense of pride at being able to make and write their own history, a history, which has turned its back forever on genocide and which is instituting, as critical values and objectives, unity, peace, justice, democracy and development.

These consultations, we are reminded, are not the result of chance, and would not have taken place nor known as much success as the international community has seen, had it not been for the firm will of the Rwandan leadership and the Rwandan people to commit themselves with determination to peace and security of individuals and property throughout the entire Rwandan territory; unity and reconciliation of the Rwandan people; and good governance which, in the end, is our policy engine and which has allowed us to dismantle the structure of a State that was too centralized and totalitarian and which stifled positive initiatives, as well as the involvement of the people in decisions concerning their own development.

We have also set up principles of accountability and transparency at all levels of public life by creating strong autonomous institutions to combat corruption, nepotism and abuses of power. The success of these initiatives can be measured today by the fact that a recent study of the World Bank Institute has cited Rwanda among the developing countries that are the best managed, the best governed and not corrupt. Such public transparency would not have been possible without our having eradicated the culture of impunity which had taken root in our country.

We had to take steps to completely overhaul the classical legal system and introduce a legal system that is participatory and traditional called "Gacaca", which is inspired by Rwandan know-how and whose major objective is not only to punish crimes committed during the genocide, but also, and especially, to reconcile Rwandans.

It should also be pointed out that the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide obliges the international community to prevent, stop and punish genocide. While the international community came up short in its obligations under this Convention, we did greatly appreciate the subsequent establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), established to bring to justice and punish the perpetrators of this crime.

Our country was particularly pleased and satisfied with the recent decision of the Security Council to appoint a full-time prosecutor for the ICTR in order to improve its performance and its effectiveness. We are of the view, however, that other reforms could still be initiated to obtain this objective which, in our view, would help restore human dignity.

Regionally, the political and security situation in the Great Lakes Region in Central Africa has tangibly improved since last year. Rwanda is pleased with the ongoing peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has led to the formation of an inclusive transitional Government and the reunification of that country.

We are disposed to work with this new Government, as well as with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), to achieve disarmament, demobilization and effective repatriation, as called for in the Agreements of Lusaka and Pretoria, of the ex-FAR and the Interahamwe militia, whose belligerent activities are at the heart of the two regrettable clashes between our two countries.

With respect to the situation in Burundi, this requires more attention on the part of the international community. Rwanda, at this point, is calling on all the parties to consider the best interests of the Burundians and to join with the ongoing peace initiatives supported by countries in the region so that we can put an end to the unspeakable suffering of the Burundian population.

This being the case, at a time when these different African peace initiatives are beginning to take form, it is time to call on the international community to accompany them and support organizing an international conference for peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. This conference would hopefully produce a kind of Marshall Plan for the development of the region.

Elsewhere in Africa and throughout the world, Rwanda condemns the fact that conflicts, often conflicts that have been going on for some years, continue to claim many human lives and deflect enormous financial and material resources that could be allocated to developmental projects.

We are of the view, however, that these conflicts will not disappear on their own, unless we pay attention to them and unless we attack the root causes of these conflicts and, in particular, unless we put into place effective and appropriate mechanisms to prevent, manage and resolve these conflicts.

Indeed, we must all work together, resolutely, to promote dialogue in good faith, solidarity among nations, non-exclusion, the human dimension, international law and diplomatic activities as a means worthy of the individual and of nations to resolve their differences.

The point concerning United Nations reform is on the agenda of our Organization and has been for several years, although we have never been able to agree on the scope and content of the necessary reforms. That the United Nations needs to be reformed is without doubt. In fact, as the United Nations Secretary-General indicated, when the stakes change, we must adapt our responses to them.

It is certain that the challenges facing the international community today are different from those they faced from the 1940s to the 1980s. Rwanda is also convinced, therefore, that the institutions, the structures and the working methods of the United Nations, which have been adopted over the years must be adjusted and fine-tuned to the realities of the day.

Would it not be fair, for example, in a world which has fundamentally changed, that we question the membership and the decision-making methods in the Security Council? At a time when we are requiring all nations to have democratic governance, is it not legitimate to require the Security Council itself to be more representative and more democratic in its methods of work?

Rwanda supports the proposal submitted by other Member States to increase the number of members of the Security Council to better reflect regional realities and therefore to allow a better representation of developing countries. Nevertheless, in order to do that, we must bear in mind the fact that the Security Council has been placed as a body under the General Assembly and that its enlargement can in no way compromise that order.

We must therefore better reorganize the United Nations so that it can achieve the goals of ensuring peace and security among nations, developing more equitable international relations in the areas of cooperation and friendly ties and inspiring and guaranteeing the international order and international law. In doing so we must ask ourselves why the United Nations has been unable to respond collectively and effectively to such recent crises and tragedies as the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the situation in Iraq. Why has the United Nations been unable to prevent or stop various crises throughout the world or to fulfil its primary mission of ensuring peaceful co-existence among nations? Why has the United Nations been unable to be an effective and efficient catalyst for harmonious political, social and economic development in all nations? We believe that the answer to all of those questions, and many others, will determine the nature and scope of the reforms to be undertaken. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's decision to establish a high-level panel to address the question of reform and to make proposals to the General Assembly.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, the major challenges in the world today include poverty; poor governance; economic, political and social injustice — which give rise to many internal conflicts — international terrorism; globalization and the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other widespread diseases. Those challenges cannot be successfully addressed without greater and more effective cooperation on the part of all countries. Nevertheless, the development goals for the new millennium, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the current series of negotiations in the Doha round to allow greater access to world markets for products from developing countries, the recent decision by the World Trade Organization (WTO) to allow poor countries to import low-cost basic generic medicines to combat such illnesses as AIDS, and the various tools established by the United Nations to combat international terrorism all represent the beginning of collective responses to those challenges. However, those initiatives will only bear fruit if all nations abandon selfish reflexes, such as those that were at the heart of the recent failure of WTO negotiations at Cancún.

The President returned to the Chair.

Rwanda would like to take advantage of this forum to reiterate its steadfast determination to commit itself and to contribute, however modestly, to address those challenges. We are committed to working with all the nations of the world to begin that undertaking in our region and in our dear continent, Africa.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Solomon Ekuma Dominic Berewa, Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Solomon Ekuma Dominic Berewa, Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Solomon Ekuma Dominic Berewa, Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Berewa (Sierra Leone): My delegation wishes to congratulate you very warmly, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the world body, and to assure you of its unflinching and continued support for a successful tenure. We would also like to extend our appreciation to your predecessor for successfully directing the affairs of the General Assembly during one of the most trying periods in the recent history of the United Nations.

On 19 August 2003, the United Nations was shocked to its foundations by a fatal bomb attack on its headquarters in Baghdad. On behalf of my President and the Government and people of Sierra Leone, I extend our deepest condolences to the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations family and the families of all those who perished in that attack. They died for the cause of peace and humanity and for the values and aspirations that the United Nations symbolizes.

We call on all members of the United Nations and on other nations to spare no measures to respect the sanctity of the United Nations, because it is only when that sanctity is respected that the United Nations can fulfil its responsibilities to mankind.

The majority of the world's poor and deprived people live in Africa, bedevilled by hunger, disease, mass illiteracy, ignorance, civil conflict, extreme poverty, bad governance, abuses of human rights, inadequate educational opportunities, gender inequality, environmental hazards, poor transport and communications facilities and debt. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) embodies the vision of Africans themselves to rid their continent of those perils and to enjoy a standard of living befitting the twenty-first century. Those goals are also in consonance with the Millennium Development Goals of the Millennium Declaration. My delegation believes that the world will be a better, happier, more tolerant and peaceful place if the goals of those two impressive declarations are attained.

We also believe that to achieve those goals, we have to come down from the lofty platform of rhetoric to the practical reality of sincere, honest and sacrificial partnership and collaboration between the haves and the have-nots. Tangible result is the acid-test of the

sincerity and honesty of that partnership and collaboration. My delegation wishes to reaffirm Sierra Leone's commitment to the pursuance of the goals of those two development blueprints as the most credible and realistic channels of, and guidelines for, accelerated development.

But we, the poor countries, execute those laudable blueprints with great trepidation, because of the devastating effect of the dreadful HIV/AIDS epidemic, which, without universal effort, is bound to cancel out, and even reverse, all development gains. In the light of that, my delegation proposes that antiretroviral drugs be made available as a matter of human right to everyone everywhere who may need it.

Sierra Leone has in recent years repeatedly reiterated its faith in the United Nations as the only Organization that can hold the crisis-ridden world together. My delegation wishes to reaffirm that faith, which is built on the conviction that collective action is the strength of the Organization. As we are all aware, deviating from the principle of collective action can subject the United Nations to tremendous strain; it can even hamstring the Organization, leaving us a weak and divided family. My delegation calls upon all nations — big and small, rich and poor — to uphold that principle as the Organization's driving force.

The unity of purpose and collective action of the United Nations are even more imperative in the context of the ever-increasing demands placed upon it by the numerous conflicts and humanitarian crises to which it has to respond. The expansion and complexity of those challenges reinforce the need for collaboration and partnership with continental and regional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to resolve crises. It is the considered view of my delegation that such collaboration and partnership, designed and financially and materially facilitated, can respond to conflicts and other crises much more speedily and productively than can a distant and overstretched United Nations alone. We are of the firm conviction that the hundreds of thousands of lives that have been lost in the West African subregion, especially in Sierra Leone and Liberia, would have been saved if such a functional relationship, predicated on proactive conflict prevention, had existed between the United Nations and ECOWAS.

Two of the most worrying challenges to peace are terrorism and the proliferation of arms, including weapons of mass destruction. We unreservedly deplore terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and we reaffirm our commitment to resolving differences and conflicts through non-violent means. The proliferation of small arms in the West African subregion is of special concern to Sierra Leone. While a multi-pronged strategy to rid the country of small weapons, including an arms-for-development project spearheaded by the United Nations Development Programme, has yielded encouraging and hopeful results, we believe that only a concerted regional approach that includes genuine and selfless political will can eliminate that scourge from the region.

The Government and people of Sierra Leone have accepted the challenge to recover from the scourge of the war and to rejoin the path of development. Accordingly, a comprehensive national recovery programme has been designed to respond to post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction needs and to lay the foundations to address the issues that generated the conflict.

A priority component of the recovery process is the consolidation of democratic governance. Preparations for nation-wide local government elections are in the ultimate stages. We attach considerable significance to those elections, because they will constitute a major step in the process of decentralization, around which the scheme of our participatory governance is going to revolve.

In order to tackle some of the root causes that created the wedge between the people and successive Governments, which partly caused the conflict, we have embarked on a fundamental governance reform programme that involves the judiciary, public service, human rights, accountability and transparency, local government and tackling corruption and abuse of power.

We have made remarkable progress in the area of security, which is the prerequisite for our national revival and development. An international military advisory and training team led by the United Kingdom has provided training that has considerably enhanced the professional competence of our armed forces. With that training has come renewed confidence in the armed forces, as indicated by the nationwide deployment of personnel. With support from the Government of the United Kingdom, our police force has also been trained, restructured and equipped to carry out its responsibilities. But with war anywhere in

the subregion, Sierra Leone never feels safe and secure. That is why we welcome, with profound appreciation to ECOWAS and the United Nations, the initiative to put the region on a path to peace.

While welcoming the relief provided by positive developments in the Liberian peace process, my delegation feels that we are duty bound to urge the international community to never again fall into complacency about conflicts, as it did in the case of Liberia.

My delegation is very conscious of the heavy investment of the United Nations and the international community, which has yielded the peace Sierra Leone now enjoys. The momentum to consolidate the hard-won peace and embark on a meaningful course of development is our highest priority. That is why we whole-heartedly welcome the Security Council's pro[illegible]amme for the phased withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, which is based on the capacity of our security forces to discharge their functions and on the overall security environment in Sierra Leone and the subregion.

I am happy to report that the re-establishment of civil authority throughout the country has been one of our major post-conflict accomplishments. Legal and judicial law-enforcement administrations have been reactivated in parts of the country that were previously under rebel occupation, and schools and health facilities, along with better social facilities, are being rehabilitated and reopened.

On the economic front, the certificate of origin regime for the export of diamonds is producing positive results, as proceeds from the sale of diamonds continue to rise steadily. New areas of alluvial diamond deposits have been discovered, and prospecting for kimberlite deposits continues. Various regulatory procedures, including legislation and expert advice, are in the pipeline to curtail illegal exploitation and to ensure that Sierra Leoneans derive the benefit they deserve from that resource.

Two transitional bodies — the Special Court to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for the human rights excesses in the war, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was set up for victims and perpetrators of abuses to tell their stories, thereby laying the foundation for healing, reconciliation and forgiveness — are on course to achieve their objectives.

The future of 57,000 ex-combatants is a major factor in the management of the costly peace that is so relished today in Sierra Leone. The process of re-absorbing those people into society as law-abiding, peaceful, productive and patriotic citizens has been slow, tedious and expensive. But we have had to attempt that character transformation exercise as a conflict-relapse prevention mechanism. With that reorientation, our governance reform programme and our sound youth policy, which makes ex-combatants and other young people stakeholders in society, the possibility of resorting to violence and destruction as the only way to vent grievances and resolve conflict has been reduced.

Our other area of grave concern is the welfare of the hundreds of thousands of children who missed opportunities for education because of the war. The magnitude of the problem is such that we have had to form a special commission for war-affected children.

Let me conclude by reassuring the United Nations that the heavy investment in peace in Sierra Leone has not gone, and will never go, in vain. We are determined to do whatever we can to protect and consolidate the peace for which we have all sacrificed so much. We fully recognize our responsibility as the model of success for United Nations peacekeeping. We wish to give the same reassurances to our many friends for their wonderful contributions in various forms over the years. Those include the British, Chinese, American, Nigerian and Guinean Governments and the European Union.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Solomon Ekuma Dominic Berewa, Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lassana Traoré, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

Mr. Traoré (Mali) (*spoke in French*): First, Sir, please accept my warm congratulations and my fervent hopes for your successful achievement of the mission entrusted to you. Your election to the presidency of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly is a fitting tribute by the international community to the people of Saint Lucia. I am convinced that with your experience

and your distinguished intellectual and ethical qualities, you will successfully lead our work to be carried out in the best spirit.

Sir, I wish to convey to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, the congratulations of the delegation of Mali for the skill, dedication and spirit of initiative and the authority with which he directed the work of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I also take this solemn occasion to pay well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan for his dedication to the ideals of the United Nations.

The present session is opening in a context where the United Nations is still confronting challenges to its very existence; those challenges moved humanity 58 years ago to equip itself with an instrument of hope capable of meeting them. Let us recall that the United Nations were conceived to save ourselves from the demons of war and insecurity. The idea was to secure a state of grace — one of man reconciled with himself — and to create the conditions for reducing material want, uncertainty and poverty.

Flashpoints of tension — fire and smoke — exist and are developing in many places. Poverty and distress are the daily lot of many inhabitants of our planet, particularly in Africa.

The arrival of the new millennium brought enormous hopes. We have barely turned to the third page of this millennium and new challenges are assailing humankind. Upon us are other questions for which we must uncover the appropriate solutions so that our Organization will remain true to itself and pursue its goals without succumbing to a hijacking of its mandate.

The Government of Mali believes that the United Nations remains an instrument of great value. Defining the rules of the game is one thing; applying them under the watchful eye of an impartial arbiter who has the necessary authority and the corresponding means to act is another. We need to work to make the United Nations that authority and arbiter.

For its part, under the distinguished leadership of Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré, President of the Republic of Mali, our country is steadfastly committed to supporting the United Nations in attaining its objective: the full development of humankind.

At the national level, our President is firmly committed to strengthening the institutions of the Republic and of communities, to promote democracy and human rights and to give a boost to good governance, economic growth and sustainable development.

Peace and security are among the principal values held and venerated by the peoples of the entire world as they are essential for their social and economic development.

Mali has been fully committed to the twin challenges of conflict prevention and conflict management. At the subregional level, Mali has sent troops to Liberia, and our President has been personally committed to solidarity with the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire in their search for coordinated political solutions to the crisis faced by that brotherly country. That testifies to the importance we attach to peace and stability.

At the continental level, our country will unstintingly continue its tireless efforts within the African Union, which have deployed continuously since the establishment of the African Union to achieve stability, the guarantor for all economic social and cultural development. Therefore, Mali calls on all States to adopt a multilateral approach, subregional and regional cooperation and international solidarity, with rigorous respect for the sovereignty of States.

The overall situation prevailing in the Middle East, in particular the conflict in Iraq, remains a burning issue of the day and a major concern for the international community. We should point out to the protagonists of these conflicts that war is never anything other than a political failure and that the victories of peace are no less renowned than those of war. Peace between Palestinians and Israelis will garner more fame than all wars combined. The parties to the conflict should be mindful of that.

In addition, we invite the international community to provide aid and assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority because the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and the restrictions imposed as a result of occupation have caused a clear deterioration of the socio-economic fabric of Palestinian society. It is therefore to be feared that the strategy of destruction will henceforth become a constant in how conflicts unfold in general.

Terrorism is one of the gravest threats to human security. Combating that scourge requires strengthening national and regional capacities. It should be recalled

that Mali has ratified all international legal instruments concerning terrorism and transnational organized crime, as well as the additional protocol.

It is encouraging to note that the international community, in particular the United Nations, has made the campaign against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons a major focus of concern. That is particularly reassuring because, for the last ten years, small arms and light weapons have weighed on the future and destiny of the peoples of Africa. Their adverse affects have been a great blow to human dignity, freedom and security.

Mali, which since 10 May 2003 has held the presidency of the Human Security Network, calls on all States to unite for the success of the initiative of the framework convention on international transfers of arms, currently being drafted, which is expected to be launched in Bamako next October; it will be an important step towards the establishment of the mandate of the heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States to transform the moratorium on small arms and light weapons into an international convention.

In addition, Mali continues to be deeply concerned by the phenomenon of child soldiers and calls for vigorous action to put an end to that practice, if we wish to save future generations from the scourge of war.

For many reasons, the level of security for the world's population has considerably deteriorated in recent years. Even today, in many African countries, people are often caught in the grip of conflicts involving guerrillas, rebel groups, civil war, ethnic war, clan war and clashes between militias, warlords and regular army forces. Designing a political strategy based on the idea of human security has now become a very urgent priority.

For its mandate at the head of the Human Security Network, Mali has made its priority the issues of education in human rights, children in armed conflict, the campaign against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, gender in peacekeeping operations and food security.

In the field of economics, the Government of Mali is adopting stimulative fiscal measures in order to attract national and international investment, in particular in the productive areas of cotton, mines and raising livestock. But those efforts are being hampered by the effects of globalization. In fact, in agriculture in particular, it is not so much poverty that offends as the conditions that engender that poverty.

To give but one example, Mali — like other African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries — is suffering from the cotton competition with developed countries, which each year provide five times more funds in subsidies to their farmers than they do to development assistance. Those subsidies have a direct impact on world cotton prices, which are lower than they have been for 25 years. That policy of cotton production and export subsidies by certain developed countries must be abandoned, because they are contrary to the rules and principles of the multilateral trade system. They are ruining African economies, depriving our farmers of their share of the world market, and exacerbating the poverty that we undertook to eliminate at the Millennium Summit.

On another topic, Mali welcomes the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action, whose aim is forge partnerships that will better meet the special needs of the landlocked developing countries. We believe that that Programme makes it incumbent on the international community to devise a new framework of cooperation with respect to transportation and transit — a policy that will help developing landlocked countries to integrate into the world economy and to speed up their socio-economic development. To do so, it is essential that this Programme of Action be implemented with diligence at all levels, with the active assistance of the technical and financial partners of the landlocked developing countries.

Given the major changes that the world is going through today and the many challenges that it faces, Africa decided to crystallize its willingness to act through two initiatives: the creation of the African Union and the launching of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. These two initiatives represent a clear and courageous vision of the way Africa intends to shoulder its responsibilities with respect to its own development and its full integration into the world economy.

We deeply appreciate the commitment made by the international community here at United Nations Headquarters to support the tremendous task of development in Africa, and we welcome the actions of the Group of Eight aimed at establishing programmes

that will help translate into reality the commitments made in the African action plan. We hope that this example will be followed by the international community, because the implementation of NEPAD will require substantial and effective support.

With respect to information and communication technologies, my delegation welcomes the upcoming holding, in December 2003 in Geneva, of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, which will offer the international community, and African States in particular, the opportunity to discuss the role of those technologies and their impact on socio-economic development. The second phase will be held in Tunis, Africa, and we hope that the Summit will adopt specific measures to promote the development of the least advanced people in these areas.

The world is in crisis, and the worldwide crisis at present is largely due to humankind's inability to comprehend and to take on the responsibilities required by the new role that is required in the world. In the context of this crisis, realities have changed also for the United Nations. Today we have to deal with those who had previously been overlooked.

For Mali, the United Nations remains the living incarnation of this hope for peace and security. It is an unequalled instrument. But, like any other instrument, it can worn out if it is overused, and from time to time it needs to be reinvigorated in order to be more effective, efficient and modern and to perform better.

Our Organization is at a crossroads. To quote a contemporary author,

> "If we keep looking towards the past to prolong it, we are doomed. If we look towards a new horizon, then our strength, our creativity and the power of our intellect will do the rest."

The past of our Organization has shown its limits. We must now implement reforms that will allow us to realize our hopes for the future. Global governance requires the democratization of the decision-making structures that will implement it. The current membership of the Security Council, for example, no longer meets the needs of our planet. Its composition must reflect its universal nature. Therefore, we are in favour of opening it up and expanding it to include other Member States in order better to meet the complex challenges of the day.

Mali has taken note of the commitments made along these lines by the Secretary-General in his most recent report and reaffirms the central role of the United Nations in the implementation of international commitments and the fact that this can be done only if there is a dynamic and innovative partnership between developed and developing countries.

The creation of the International Criminal Court, whose elected judges and Prosecutor were sworn in this year, is certainly a success for the international community, which has fought against impunity and made it a subject of international concern. In fact, for two decades, the fight against impunity and respect for human dignity has mobilized all people of goodwill.

Although recent developments seem to indicate that prospects for the advent of an independent international judicial forum do not appear promising, I would recall that the path to follow involves not only resolving conflicts and establishing peace, but also requires our determination to work together. We are convinced of this, and therefore Mali would plead for a strong ICC — a universal ICC, acting as an instrument which cannot be deterred and which will help contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that democracy, justice, freedom, peace, security, development and respect for commitments are common values that are our foundation for, and give us a sense of, our humanity.

All people must be given their freedom and their dignity. We therefore call on all States to look to the future to imagine and to promote the lifestyle that corresponds to the aspirations of our people. To do so, we are determined to reject any sense of fatalism of whatever kind — political, economic, social or cultural.

Indeed, today there are men and women who are capable, through their work and through their will, of realizing the aspirations of our peoples for well-being, peace, security, prosperity and sustainable development. Now we can hope to build a new world — a world that is rich in its diversity — within the framework of the United Nations and on new bases, a glorious world in which we can work together in a spirit of solidarity.

Some of those men and women, on behalf of the peoples of the world, paid with their lives for their

dedication to the lofty ideals of the United Nations. Let them always be in our thoughts and prayers.

Let us all work together. Let us all continue to believe in the intrinsic nature of human beings — in their basic dignity and kind-heartedness.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kassymzhomart Tokaev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Tokaev (Kazakhstan): Allow me, Sir, to express my confidence that, under your able leadership, the general debate of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session will be successful and fruitful.

At the turn of the millennium, the international community is living through changes of epic proportions. The process of transition to a new world order is facing unprecedented global threats: inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflicts; international terrorism and organized crime; natural, man-made and humanitarian disasters; diseases and epidemics; and energy and environmental problems.

These threats are in addition to globalization processes. All States now share in not only economic, technological, information and management issues, but also must face the numerous problems looming over humankind like a dark cloud.

We in Kazakhstan believe that the time has come for the entire international community to join together to ensure broad and effective cooperation to address global threats. Today, it is becoming increasingly evident that States' involvement in globalization processes is an important factor in their economic prosperity.

It is our conviction that there is no alternative to Kazakhstan's political and economic openness. In the past four years, our country has had one of the fastest economic growth rates in the world. Kazakhstan is leading the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in main economic indicators. As a country with a market economy, Kazakhstan is an integral part of the global economy and an active participant in the globalization process. Its early admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) is a top priority for Kazakhstan.

Our country's efforts to create a comprehensive security system in Asia are well known. The process of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, initiated by President Nursultan Nazarbaev, serves this purpose and also provides for active cooperation between regional States in such an important area as the combating of international terrorism. Further support for this process by the United Nations and all of our partners will undoubtedly go a long way towards creating a climate of trust and good-neighbourly relations on the Asian continent.

We are firmly committed to strengthening regional integration. Kazakhstan is actively involved in work within the Eurasian Economic Community. We have great expectations regarding the creation of a single economic space in the territories of four CIS countries. A significant contribution to counter-terrorism efforts and trade and economic cooperation in the Eurasian region could be made by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We are taking steps to develop cooperation with the Central Asian States. We intend to further promote the activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Kazakhstan backs United Nations action to strengthen the efforts of the international community in support of the dialogue between civilizations and religions. Kazakhstan, a unique State in terms of religious tolerance and inter-ethnic harmony, convened a congress of representatives of world religions and confessions, which, in the unanimous opinion of its participants, revealed a considerable peacemaking capacity of our country.

An unprecedented attack against the United Nations office in Baghdad in August was the cruellest and largest-scale terrorist act in the entire history of our Organization. Together with the rest of the international community, Kazakhstan pays a special tribute to the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and his colleagues.

In our view, it is imperative to ensure that efforts to restore peace and stability in Iraq are carried out within the legal framework of the United Nations. The post-war reconstruction of the country and assistance to the Iraqi population should be provided only under the umbrella of the United Nations. Kazakhstan has already made a practical contribution to this process by deploying in Iraq a group of its military officers.

The Iraqi crisis has become a serious test for the United Nations and has highlighted the urgent need to carry out the institutional reform of the Organization.

Kazakhstan reaffirms its commitment to the concept of a multipolar world as a political philosophy of modern international relations. At the same time, we do not reject unipolarity if its means joining together the efforts of all States in the world in a bid to avert global threats.

Given its authority, universal character and unique experience, the United Nations continues to play an indispensable coordinating role in all global affairs. Its effectiveness, however, is dependent on our will, and we should, through joint efforts, reform the Organization with a view to democratizing international relations. In this context, it is essential to strengthen the role of the Security Council in the settlement of crisis situations and to provide it with appropriate mandates and means for conflict-prevention. We call for making it a more representative body by co-opting five new members, including Germany and Japan, as well as, on the basis of rotation, African, Asian and Latin American States. In order to facilitate consensus, which is greatly needed, new Security Council members might exercise the veto power, with certain exceptions, subject to further discussion in the high-level panel which the Secretary-General intends to establish. We believe that it will also be necessary to increase the number of non-permanent members, with due account being taken of the interests of the Asian region.

In our view, coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations should be reinvigorated. In this context, Kazakhstan proposes to establish a permanent council of regional organizations under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General.

It is time to combine, in practical terms, the efforts of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO and other leading economic and financial organizations to address poverty and social development. Kazakhstan believes that close attention should be paid to the proposal to establish an economic and social security council.

Kazakhstan supports the Secretary-General's proposal — to which I referred earlier — to establish a high-level panel to examine current challenges to peace and security and to strengthen the United Nations system.

We believe that issues of environmental protection in the framework of sustainable development should be considered as a key item on the United Nations agenda. In this context, President Nazarbaev's proposal, made last year in Johannesburg, to create a United Nations register of global environmental problems is especially relevant. Such a register would provide an opportunity to ensure a continuous exchange of information among United Nations Member States about trends in the global environmental situation, which is extremely important for the prevention of natural disasters. With regard to environmental issues, I would like, from this rostrum, once again to urge the international community to pay due attention to the search for practical solutions to the problems of the Aral Sea and the Semipalatinsk region.

The current surge of terrorist acts throughout the world has made clear the transnational nature of terrorism. We must recognize that terrorism is well organized, financially self-sufficient and bolstered by powerful ideological dictums that are poisoning the consciousness of an ever-greater number of people.

Against that background, the strengthening of the international legal framework of counter-terrorist cooperation is especially relevant. Kazakhstan supports the adoption, without further delay, of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism.

Kazakhstan, which has drug routes running through its territory, calls for joint efforts by States to eliminate the evil of drug trafficking, which seriously erodes international security. Increasing drug production in Afghanistan demands special attention. In order to effectively counter the existing drug threat, it is necessary to apply an integrated approach on the basis of an agreed international strategy with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime playing a coordinating role.

Kazakhstan has put forward an initiative regarding the establishment in Almaty of a Central Asian preventive diplomacy and conflict management centre and calls for its support. Such an institution would strengthen the United Nations activities in the region, which should be in the interests of all countries concerned.

As a State that has voluntarily renounced its nuclear heritage, Kazakhstan is concerned about the continued proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The desire of a number of countries and some extremist organizations to possess nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction poses a serious threat to global security. The well-known British writer Aldous Huxley was prophetic when he said:

"Technological progress has merely provided us with more efficient means of going backwards."

Let us face the facts: today, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty do not work in practice. The main reason for this state of affairs is weakened international control.

There are already 39 States in the world capable of producing a nuclear bomb or a nuclear device and at least 8 countries with significant nuclear capacity. In addition, there are at least another 4 countries whose non-nuclear status is highly questionable.

The United Nations and its institutions should have the last word in solving the problem of nuclear non-proliferation. There is actually one way out: tighten control and improve transparency with regard to weapons development and testing.

Existing international agreements in this area should be adapted to new realities. We can no longer accept the fact that the international community lacks effective means to discipline States violating non-proliferation regimes. Here we witness the absence of a single standard: some countries are punished by military force, while others are simply urged to give up their nuclear programmes.

Kazakhstan has welcomed the initiative of the Group of Eight regarding a global partnership against the proliferation of nuclear materials and weapons of mass destruction, and it hopes for fruitful cooperation on the issue with that group of States.

Our country considers it important to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in August in Almaty, has become a turning point in the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Almaty Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted as an outcome of the Conference have laid a solid foundation for global partnership designed to put in place effective transit transport systems. Occupying a vast stretch of land in Eurasia, Kazakhstan is keenly interested in the practical implementation of the goals in these documents so that it can better tap its own transport potential.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's commitment to the United Nations reform process in order to ensure a safer and more just world order. I fully share the Secretary-General's sense of urgency when it comes to structural changes within the United Nations. Indeed, history would be unforgiving to us if we were to squander an opportunity to reform our Organization.

The President: I now call on Mr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to express my cordial congratulations to the President for presiding over this important session of the General Assembly. I wish also to express my congratulations to other members of the Bureau on their election.

Less than 60 years ago, our founding fathers established the United Nations, with the aspiration to promote peace and security through cooperation and to make our world a better place. The creation of this Organization was in fact the manifestation of the international community's determination to prevent the scourge of war, which had inflicted tremendous loss and damage upon humankind. The United Nations was also designed to promote economic, social and human development and assist Member States to eradicate injustice and poverty.

These objectives and concerns remain as valid as ever and perhaps are even more relevant today. We believe it is time to take stock of recent developments and the utility and record of the United Nations, with a view to promoting the authority, efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations, and recognizing its central role in addressing the challenges of our time.

The United States waged an unsanctioned war against Iraq with three expressed objectives: to find weapons of mass destruction, to fight international terrorism and to bring democracy to the Iraqi people. The first is yet to be realized. The second has backfired. And, as far as the third is concerned, the collapse of a dictatorship is a highly welcome development in the region, but, as history has shown, social change, including the democratization of a society, can only be brought about from within, and cannot be imported in tandem with tank columns. In our view, callous indifference to the negative

consequences of the invasion of Iraq to the conduct of international relations and a lack of full understanding of the post-war situation in Iraq, particularly the social and the cultural complexities of Iraqi society, have created both an international predicament and a source of instability at our borders.

As a neighbouring State, Iran adopted a policy of self-restraint during the war in Iraq and has continued to adopt a constructive approach to the current situation in that country by calling on the occupying Powers to allow the immediate transfer of Iraqi sovereignty to the Iraqi people and to withdraw their troops. We welcome and support the establishment of the Iraqi Governing Council and the Council of Ministers and call for granting a central and clear-cut role to the United Nations in the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty and the constitutional process. We wish to promote unity and greater respect for stability and security among various ethnic and religious groups in Iraq, and encourage and support the swift setting in motion of a constitutional and institutional process, with a view to establishing a democratic and fully representative Government by and for the people of Iraq. We urge respect for the national unity, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq and the provision of relief emergency assistance to the people of Iraq.

Pending the restoration of sovereignty and authority to the people of Iraq, the occupying Powers have the legal responsibility under applicable international law to provide for the welfare of the people under occupation, particularly their security. In this context, the United Nations should be allowed to play a central role in laying the ground work, on an urgent basis, in assisting the Iraqi people to establish a democratic and representative Government and in supervising the transfer of authority to them. The international community, in general, and Iraq's neighbours, in particular, will undoubtedly lend their full support to the United Nations in this endeavour.

I would like to express once again my condolences to the Secretary-General and the United Nations community as a whole for the loss of a brave servant of the nations, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, and other United Nations personnel in the terrorist bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq. The people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran also sympathize with the people of Iraq over the loss of another man of peace, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer al-Hakim, in a separate terrorist bombing in Iraq.

The violence against and the killing of innocent Palestinian people by the Israeli Army have become a daily occurrence, and prospects for a viable peace are steadily diminishing. The Palestinian people live under brutal occupation and oppression with no hope for relief, let alone peace and prosperity. The policy of the Sharon Government of reoccupying Palestinian cities and using military force to further terrorize the Palestinian people has exacerbated the situation and added to the despair and frustration of ordinary people. The international community has a major responsibility to take effective measures in alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The recent decision of the Israeli regime to expel President Arafat from his homeland has outraged the international community, in general, and the Muslim world, in particular. I am confident that the free and civilized world will continue to reject and condemn such a move by Israel. It is regrettable that the United States, last week, once again and for the thirty-sixth time, resorted to the veto to block the adoption of a draft resolution.

On behalf of the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I wish to take this opportunity to express our satisfaction over the steady improvement of the situation in Afghanistan under the leadership of President Karzai and his Government. At the same time, we are concerned about problems such as the regrouping of remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, the paucity of international assistance and the increase in opium poppy cultivation. Unless the international community is more forthcoming in assisting the Afghan people and Government, recent achievements in Afghanistan may be jeopardized.

We have a great stake in the return of full normality and stability to Afghanistan. In this area, we have strongly supported the central role of the United Nations in helping the Afghans to rebuild their own country, and we believe that the United Nations should continue to play this role for the foreseeable future.

Terrorism is a global phenomenon that requires a global response. Fighting terrorism requires a multifaceted approach that goes well beyond a simple focus on law and order and also addresses its underlying causes. A unilateral and one-dimensional approach, based merely on the use of force, may neutralize some threats and bring some psychological comfort to those who seek revenge in response to

terrorist acts, but few would regard that as a serious methods of uprooting international terrorism.

Any attempt to link terrorism to a specific religion or culture is prejudicial, politically motivated and thus unacceptable. No religion authorizes its adherents to kill innocent people, whatever the objective of such acts might be.

The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Iran has done more than its fair share to effectively combat terrorism. In the heat of the military intervention in Afghanistan and in the wake of the Taliban collapse, thousands of individuals were denied entry into Iran; more than 2,300 individuals with false or no travel documents were deported and hundreds of suspects were arrested, interrogated and handed over to their countries of nationality or residence; and lists of such persons were brought to the attention of the relevant United Nations officials and bodies. Iran continues to cooperate in serious and long-term efforts to combat terrorism in a comprehensive, non-discriminatory and non-selective manner — efforts that do not pick and choose between good and bad, or useful, terrorists.

Weapons of mass destruction are among the most potent threats to peace and security at the regional and global levels. The Chemical Weapons Convention, Biological Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are the results of our collective wisdom in our efforts to eliminate the threat of chemical and biological weapons and the spread of nuclear weapons. We believe that more needs to be done. We should do more to make these basic international instruments universal. We should also do more to strengthen verification of their implementation. Finally, we should all work collectively, as mandated by the International Court of Justice, to move towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

By adhering to all of these three instruments as an original party, my country has shown its determination to work towards the complete eradication of weapons of mass destruction from the Earth. Our commitment to international regimes on weapons of mass destruction lies not merely in our contractual obligations but, more importantly, in our religious convictions and historical experience. No country has suffered as acutely as mine from the tragic scars left from being victims of such weapons, particularly against the backdrop of a complacent international environment. We are convinced that the pursuit of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction will not only fail to provide deterrence or enhance security and influence, but will only increase vulnerability. Thus, I can state categorically that for all these reasons, weapons of mass destruction have no place in the defensive strategy of my country. We believe the only option is to work actively towards a global and regional ban on these weapons, and we have thus spared no effort in this regard.

However, the efforts to ban, or strengthen the ban, on weapons of mass destruction should not provide any excuse for denying States the right to develop technology for peaceful purposes. Unfortunately, the political pressure against the Islamic Republic of Iran to relinquish its inalienable right to develop peaceful nuclear technology is mounting, while some nuclear weapon States continue to test and develop advanced tactical nuclear weapons programmes. Furthermore, in defiance of international calls to adhere to the NPT, Israel is continuing, with impunity, its clandestine development of sophisticated nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. All NPT Review and Extension conferences have called for the suspension and freezing of Israel's tactical weapons and nuclear programmes, which are the real threats to international peace and security. They are both considered to be in contravention with the letter and spirit of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran's nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes, specifically for the planned production of 7,000 megawatts of electricity by 2020 for Iran's economic development. Iran will vigorously pursue its peaceful nuclear programme and will not give in to unreasonable, discriminatory and selective demands that go beyond the requirements of non-proliferation under existing International Atomic Energy Agency instruments. At the same time, Iran does not have a nuclear weapons programme, nor does it intend to embark on one. Thus, we have nothing to hide, and in principle have no problem with the Additional Protocol. We are eager to ensure that this step will be utilized solely to enhance confidence and remove all doubts about the peaceful nature of our nuclear programme.

Mr. Micha Ondo Bile (Equatorial Guinea), Vice-President took the Chair.

In facing global challenges, no possibility other than mutual cooperation through the United Nations will be conducive to lasting and effective solutions. The democratic process advocated at all levels within the international community needs also to be reflected within the United Nations system. The General Assembly should play a more active role in global affairs. A more representative and democratic Security Council would mean a more efficient United Nations — the kind of organization we should all want and work for.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): We thank Jan Kavan for his work, and we welcome Mr. Julian Hunte in the difficult year that awaits him.

At the beginning of this millennium, a summit of the world's leaders produced a set of development goals aimed at protecting life and promoting dignity for all peoples. This seemed an appropriate way to begin the third millennium of our modern era.

Each year since then, however, we have been reminded that this millennium started very differently and has forced us to address profound challenges to our assumptions, our relationships and our way of life. Beginning with 11 September and continuing with the violence and political crises around the world, each of our societies, nations and regions has been transformed by the intensity of these threats to our way of life and to our security.

These crises are forcing a transformation of this Organization as well. Today, reform has become essential not just in the way we decide, act and operate, but in the way we think. Reforms cannot be delayed if this General Assembly and this Organization are to be truly relevant as facilitators of world peace. If the United Nations is for the peaceful, prosperous and democratic development of today's world, then it must undergo its own democratization, so that it will have the increased moral authority to direct others through reform and democratic transition.

An organization that espouses dialogue and negotiation as alternatives to violence and conflict ought to find ways through dialogue and negotiation to arrive at a consensus on how to resolve the critical, universal issues facing us today.

This General Assembly has the chance to go down in history, not as an undermined, inadequate but well-meaning giant, but as a viable instrument of world peace. The Secretary-General's goals, from United Nations budget and financing reform to reconstituting and enlarging the Security Council, are the building blocks of the relevant, responsive, comprehending, world forum for international cooperation that the United Nations can be. We applaud his decision to empower a commission to give concrete form to the wishes of many.

Each year we speak of the need for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, never believing that next year, the region can become even more volatile and explosive. We believe the United Nations and all Member States must continue to support the renewal of the full-scale peace process. In Israel and Palestine, Armenia hails the Quartet's efforts, recognizing that the endangered road map remains the only viable option for peace in a long-suffering region.

The situation in Iraq makes the debate about the hows and whys of this conflict irrelevant. The world's small countries are accustomed to making political compromises to join the international flow. In Iraq, the principal Powers, too, must compromise so that a more engaged and empowered United Nations can rally a broad range of countries from the immediate region, as well as the rest of the world, to take on responsibility in bringing democracy and stability to a critical part of the Middle East.

It is ironic and in many ways lamentable that the evil of terrorism is what has caused us to rally together. We are fully aware that no single Government can effectively fight this danger alone. Unfortunately, the necessity for coherent measures and cooperation at national, regional and international levels is often stalled, as for example in our region, where a common threat that knows no borders is not only being addressed individually and in isolation, but also exploited for political reasons.

In our region, there is much political exploitation. The new Prime Minister of Azerbaijan made plain from this podium yesterday that in his Government's election year, they are willing, at their peril, to ignore the realities which are self-evident. Nearly a decade of negotiations brought us, two years ago, to Key West, Florida, where, hosted by the United States

Government and under the watchful eyes of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen, the President of Armenia and — whether the Prime Minister of Azerbaijan likes it or not — the President of Azerbaijan did in fact reach an understanding which reflected those realities.

There are two myths in Azerbaijan today — both of them faulty, miscalculated and risky. Since 1992, Azerbaijan has convinced itself that if they just hold out long enough, Armenia's economy will capitulate, and leave Nagorny Karabakh unprotected and defenceless. Their calculations that a blockade of Armenia would mean that our economic and social conditions will plummet while their oil-based economy grows have proven misguided and misinformed. Not only has Armenia's economy not succumbed to political pressures, but our rate of growth is greater than Azerbaijan's — and not only Azerbaijan's.

Nevertheless, they continue to cling to a second and related myth. Dreaming of future oil sales whose revenues will be used to buy armaments, Azerbaijan is anticipating the day when it will again have the resources to pursue a military solution. This is self-deception, as well. Azerbaijan has forgotten that similar fantasies led them to respond militarily to the peaceful demands of Nagorny Karabakh's population for self-determination in 1992. The military balance was hugely in their favour then, in proportions far greater than what they might hope for in the future. Still, the moral, historical, legal and psychological balance favoured the people of Nagorny Karabakh, who were fighting for their homes, their families, their security, their lives and their futures. The armaments of Azerbaijan did not then — and cannot ever — break the will of the people of Nagorny Karabakh to live freely on their own land.

Indeed, Azerbaijanis are victims, but of their own aggression. They started the war, one-sidedly. They began massacring Armenians, citizens of the Azerbaijani cities of Sumgait, Baku and Ganja — the most irresponsible reaction that a Government can undertake, using the most inhuman methods associated with pogroms.

The war that followed changed the world for two generations of Armenians, who have never lived under Azerbaijani rule. Azerbaijan's leadership, old and new, rather than remaining prisoners to the Soviet era — which they themselves rejected as historically illegitimate — can look to a future of compromise, peace, regional cooperation and prosperous, stable development.

Armenia intends to go forward. Indeed, we already have. The year 2003 has been a very good year for Armenia. On the economic front, our steady, double-digit growth rate is the fastest in the Commonwealth of Independent States and in Europe. This has led some to call Armenia the Caucasian tiger. We are pleased with the name and the challenge. We know that with economic growth comes an even greater responsibility: to confront the social gaps which can lead to social inequality and domestic instability. The shortest path to the eradication of transitional ills such as the polarization of society, the urban-rural gap and uneven access to higher education is to sustain that high level of economic growth.

That is why, with the help of the United Nations Development Programme, we embarked on the sustainable economic development programme. That is why the Government has approved and launched a poverty reduction strategy. It is also why achieving the Millennium Development Goals for poverty eradication, the awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS and the empowerment of women is an important part of Armenia's development strategy.

In Armenia, the United Nations plays a key role in promoting synergies directed at expanding the development impact of information and communications technologies. As we prepare for the World Summit on the Information Society in December in Geneva, Armenia is living a hopeful paradox. On the one hand, less than half of our more than one thousand schools are connected to the Internet; on the other hand, information and communications technologies (ICTs) comprise a significant proportion of Armenia's exports today. Still, too many in our country — just like the majority of the world population — still remain untouched by the ICT revolution and its potential.

We recognize, of course, that ICTs can be central in economies like ours, especially given the continuing blockade. Our economic growth has continued despite the blockade, which goes against the spirit and the conclusions of the recent United Nations sponsored International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation, which reaffirmed the right of access by landlocked countries to and from the sea and their freedom of transit through the territory of their neighbours by all means of transport, in accordance with the applicable rules of international law. For us, that means a condemnation of the practice of unilateral

coercive economic measures intended as political pressure.

This was also a good year for our legislative reform process. The Armenian parliament has ratified the Sixth Protocol of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, thus unconditionally abolishing the death penalty. We also adopted the draft law on the ombudsman, thus empowering our citizens and investing them with the faith necessary to govern with justice and to be governed with dignity.

Another matter that is important for us and for all humanity: Armenia continues to engage countries and Governments around the world to recognize and condemn the first genocide of the twentieth century. The survivors of the genocide and their descendants are helping to build a democratic Armenia, committed to the future without forgetting the past.

When Sergio Vieira de Mello visited Armenia several years ago, he came looking for ways to minimize the pain and suffering of Armenian refugees forced to flee their homes in Baku and Sumgait in Azerbaijan. This year, as he worked to minimize the pain and suffering of the people of Iraq, to help them rebuild their country and their Government, he and too many of his colleagues lost their lives. His death and that of Anna Lindh of Sweden remind us that ideas, more than people, scare and threaten. Those two brutal murders also suggest to us louder than any demonstration that the leadership of the world still has much to do in engaging the rejectionists, the extremists and the cynical. Our positive, forward-looking, determined steps here in the General Assembly will go a long way towards convincing them.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Cimoszewicz (Poland): At the outset, like my colleague from Armenia, I would like to express my highest tribute to the memory of the outstanding individuals whose tragic loss is a blow to the international community that is absolutely beyond repair.

The assassination of Anna Lindh, the Foreign Minister of Sweden, has demonstrated once again the risk involved in noble dedication to public service in a world exposed to senseless acts of violence and has filled people all over the world with the deepest sorrow.

The death of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his staff members came as a shock to the international community. The question is, why were they killed? That horrible act of terror seems to be highly symbolic because, in the words of the Secretary-General, it directly challenges the vision of global solidarity and collective security rooted in the Charter of the United Nations. Sadly, that is the context in which we must address the concerns on our domestic and international agendas.

Last year, when addressing the Assembly, I put forward a proposal to prepare a new act for the United Nations at the dawn of the twenty-first century. I was persuaded then, as I am now, that such a document could give fresh impetus to the principles and mechanisms of the United Nations in a changing world. It should entail the elaboration of a new catalogue of norms of international conduct in the face of the security threats and global challenges of today.

Developments on the international scene since I put forward that initiative have strengthened my belief that the United Nations would only benefit from a new, strong political signal reconfirming its role as a beacon of stability and a reliable instrument for managing change.

I believe that the best way to create the proper conditions for an unconstrained debate on the future of the United Nations is to engage outstanding public figures of international stature in an informal setting. I suggested at the time that a group of eminent personalities be charged with the task of producing an outline of the document, which would then be submitted for assessment by Member States. The composition of the group should ensure its independence, appropriate intellectual format and knowledge of international affairs. In addition, such a group's excellent moral standing and political weight would guarantee that the document designed to serve as an inspiration to Member States would be of the highest value. Thus, an essentially intellectual exercise initiated outside the institutional framework of the United Nations could be transformed into a political process, culminating in the adoption of the new act by the General Assembly.

I remain deeply convinced that despite the rapid changes in the international environment precipitated especially after 11 September 2001, the United Nations today — almost 60 years after its foundation — should retain a central role as a mechanism for resolving global problems and as a guarantor of international legitimacy.

It is a great source of satisfaction for me that the Polish initiative corresponds to the thinking of the Secretary-General and his efforts to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations and safeguard the position of the Organization as the most important institution of international security and cooperation. I wholeheartedly support his views on the need for review, and possibly a radical reform, of the international security architecture, as reflected in his latest report on the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), as well as his timely proposals voiced at the outset of our debate. Indeed, we can no longer safely assume that our current multilateral rules and institutions have the capacity to confront the current array of old and new threats to peace and security.

Since I presented my proposal last September, we have consulted extensively with governmental representatives from a number of countries. A rich collection of suggestions and comments has been compiled that will be invaluable in developing the initiative. In the consultation process, we were encouraged by the shared view of many countries as to the need to adapt the United Nations to current challenges.

Taking into account the initial outcome of the consultations, the Government of the Republic of Poland has produced a memorandum in which we have sketched a proposed outline of the mandate of the Group of Sages.

The initiative, as reflected in the memorandum, is in effect an invitation to a conceptual and holistic reflection on the nature of changes in the international system and on the most desirable vision of a new, more effective international order. It deals with the questions posed by a whole spectrum of present-day challenges, including security risks related to globalization and the emergence of non-State actors, the development gap and international solidarity, governance and subsidiarity.

The novel character of today's challenges calls for new ways of thinking and an innovative approach. It is true that protracted regional conflicts remain a very serious source of instability. Yet, along with those traditional threats, today's security environment has been increasingly dominated by a combination of new threats of a more diverse and unpredictable nature. They originate mostly within State borders rather than among States, notably in failing and failed States that are unable to control their own territories, and they are often posed by non-State actors.

To use the Secretary-General's terminology, today's threats are both "hard" and "soft", and they tend to reinforce one another. We are confronted with terrorism that has a global reach, motivated by extremist ideology and unconstrained in its readiness to inflict massive casualties. We are facing a growing risk of proliferation of deadly weapons and the spread of organized crime that often accompanies State failure. These "hard" challenges are compounded by chronic underdevelopment in many parts of the world.

"Soft" threats, such as widespread poverty, deprivation, hunger, malnutrition and rampant infectious diseases, take their tragic toll on peoples living in countries with poor economic growth. These are usually found in regions where development is often thwarted by bad governance and violent internal conflicts that result in large-scale humanitarian crises, massive abuses of human rights, political and social disruption and, ultimately, the collapse of State systems.

In the face of the new realities confronting the international community, we need to forge a consensus on the conceptual and political framework for the operation of the United Nations in upcoming decades. In this context, let me stress that my initiative is not intended to revise or change the United Nations Charter, which should remain the basis of international relations. Instead, the New Political Act should place the Charter in the context of the ongoing transformations taking place in the international environment. It should provide a new conceptual framework for, and political interpretation of, the Charter, adapting the United Nations to present-day realities and regulating the Organization's activities in those areas that are not covered by the Charter. It should accomplish that goal by redefining the objectives of the United Nations, identifying new tasks and specifying operational modalities for the Organization.

The Millennium Declaration was a clear manifestation of the ability of the Organization to take up new tasks and confront the most pressing challenges. We must make every effort to increase the capacity of the United Nations to achieve the goals set out in that landmark document, and I believe that the New Act could add a political impetus to the continuous work under way to fully implement the Declaration. Yet our experience in the post-cold-war

era made clear not just problems related to the capacity of the United Nations, but also the lack of clarity and consensus on certain principles essential for effective action in the new security environment.

A source of serious concern is the fact that the lack of an agreed and common interpretation of many terms and principles which are fundamental in the international domain could lead to chaos in international relations. The New Act for the United Nations — while taking into account the current changes in the international order — should therefore reflect the relations between numerous principles and the international conditions dominated by non-traditional threats. It should examine, for example, questions related to issues such as respect for human rights and the principle of State sovereignty, the right of self-determination and territorial integrity, conflicts and crisis management, and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. It should also address the possibility of inscribing newly emerged concepts, such as human security and the responsibility of States to protect the vulnerable, into the conceptual basis of the international system.

It is a painful reality that the United Nations is deeply divided. This limits its effectiveness and occasionally even calls into question its ability to act. The basic question is, therefore, how can we restore to the United Nations the sense of unity and cohesion embodied in the very name of the Organization? How can we prevent paralysis in management by the United Nations of international security? And how can we adjust the operating principles of the Organization so as to enable those countries that are able and willing to respond adequately to new threats to act within the institutional framework of the United Nations?

In my view, this difficult goal is unattainable without a reaffirmation of the United Nations as a community of shared values and shared goals. Such a reaffirmation could reintegrate the Organization and infuse it with a new sense of purpose. Hence, at the core of my initiative there is a need for a profound reflection on the values and principles that bind the international community together and define the behaviour of States towards each other, towards other actors on the international scene and towards their citizens.

Let me reiterate once again that Poland strongly supports the Secretary-General's intention to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities to examine the role of collective action in countering current security challenges and to review the operation of major United Nations organs, with a view to recommending necessary reforms. This idea is in perfect conformity with my initiative. I believe that the ideas which we collected in the course of last year, reflected both in the memorandum of the Polish Government and in the responses of leading experts and scholars, could provide a good starting point and make a useful contribution to the work of the panel.

I wish to affirm the strong commitment of my country to ensure the successful outcome of the Secretary-General's initiative. I intend to convey the aforementioned collected comments of eminent intellectuals on the future of the United Nations to the Panel for its consideration.

The war against the murderous regime of Saddam Hussain has exposed, in a painful way, the challenges related to the principles and practice of multilateral action and has revealed the unresolved dilemmas in this domain, which — in my view — should be addressed in the New Political Act for the United Nations. For the time being, though, the international community must focus its attention on the situation on the ground. I believe that the United Nations should be a key factor in post-war Iraq's transition to the rule of law, democracy and independence. The tremendous task of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq should be shared by the entire international community.

We must work out arrangements which will help Iraq assume, as soon as possible, its rightful, dignified place among the nations of the world. For its part, Poland remains committed to the stabilization effort in Iraq. Our participation in that endeavour is guided by the need to create the conditions for the Iraqi people to determine freely their own future and to begin a new chapter in the history of that great nation, leading it to development and prosperity.

On Monday, 29 September, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime will enter into force. I am proud that the idea put forward by Poland during the World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime, held at Naples in November 1994, was transformed — with the broad support of the international community — into a binding United Nations Convention.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria.

Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner (Austria): A few days ago, the United Nations was again attacked in Baghdad — just one month after the United Nations Headquarters was targeted in a devastating terrorist attack. My heartfelt sympathies — not only as the Foreign Minister of Austria, but also as a former staff member working here at the Headquarters of the United Nations — go to the victims, their loved ones and all colleagues in the United Nations family. Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues died as heroes. As a host country to the United Nations, Austria firmly supports the Secretary-General's call to provide the utmost security for United Nations personnel on missions everywhere in the world. Those United Nations staff members had dedicated their lives to helping the most vulnerable. Today, we are called upon to live up to their cause.

This has also been a year of lethal attacks on politicians who courageously stood for a human face for politics. We remember, with sadness, the outstanding leadership qualities and invaluable contributions of Zoran Djindjic and Anna Lindh. We are equally saddened to learn that Ms. Aquila al-Hashimi, member of the Iraqi Governing Council, has succumbed to the wounds she suffered in the recent terrorist attack.

What is at stake today is the way in which the United Nations can best shoulder its responsibility for global security and peace and how we as Member States can support the United Nations in this task. Austria, as one of the host countries of the United Nations, feels a sense of responsibility for the future functioning of the Organization.

The intense public scrutiny of the Security Council's actions over the past 12 months has opened a window of opportunity for re-launching our efforts to find unity of purpose based on a common security agenda between all nations. In this context, I greatly welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, which makes one thing crystal clear: we face nothing less than the need for a far-reaching overhaul of the United Nations system in order to enhance efficiency and legitimacy.

We must respond to this challenge and energetically revive the reform debate. The urgency we are faced with today should render a new attempt more successful.

First of all, a priority issue should be the reform of the procedures of the United Nations system. The composition of the Security Council is at odds with the geopolitical reality of the twenty-first century. It does not reflect the growing number of United Nations Members or the necessary regional balance. Decision-making is therefore perceived by many as lacking legitimacy. In my view, this discussion is not only about who should be represented in the Security Council, but — and this is at least as important — about ensuring that the decision-making is in the interests of world peace and global security. In this context the regional groups have to accept their responsibility by coming forward with solutions.

As a member of the European Union, which is about to give itself a constitution for the twenty-first century, it is important to note that we are moving gradually towards a genuine common foreign and security policy. To this end, a security doctrine is being elaborated by High Representative and Secretary General Solana for the European Council. Speaking with one voice also means more common positions in Security Council matters. This logic might one day even lead to the European Union having a seat on the Security Council.

Austria sees its national interest best served by the multilateral approach of a strong United Nations system, with the Security Council living up to its responsibility for world peace and with the primacy of international law and the universality of human rights maintained by all.

International terrorism is a direct and lethal threat to global and collective security. The terror attacks of 11 September 2001, and those against the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad, have one thing in common: they were targeted against civilization as a whole. United Nations leadership is needed more than ever to prevent and combat terrorism globally. In the United Nations system-wide division of labour, the Vienna-based Terrorism Prevention Branch of the Office on Drugs and Crime contributes to counter-terrorism efforts and offers valuable technical assistance to States with regard to signing, ratifying and implementing international conventions and protocols related to terrorism.

Another hard threat to international security is the proliferation of arms, in particular the spread of weapons of mass destruction. What is needed is obvious: the strengthening and universalization of existing disarmament, non-proliferation and export control regimes. As a practical contribution to this cause, Austria has agreed to serve as an immediate central contact for the 109 subscriber States of the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

Furthermore, the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which I had the honour to open on 3 September, appealed, in its Final Declaration, to all States to sign and ratify that Treaty, in particular to those 12 countries whose ratification is required for the Treaty's entry into force. Let me repeat and support that appeal.

In the field of non-proliferation, the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the leadership of Director General Mohamed ElBaradei is essential. Last week's General Conference of IAEA unanimously endorsed the necessity of strengthening the international nuclear safeguards system. Recent issues of compliance concerning Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have again shown the central role of IAEA.

One of the most important immediate tasks is the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq. We are convinced that success in the aim of restoring the sovereignty of Iraq as quickly as possible will hardly be feasible without the United Nations playing its part on the basis of a sound, viable and coherent policy.

In line with the human security approach, Austria was among the first to offer humanitarian aid. In Austrian hospitals we provided urgent medical assistance for children in critical condition. Furthermore, Austria participates in the "Adopt a Hospital" programme and is about to equip two hospitals in Nazariyah. Together with Slovenia and Jordan, we are preparing the establishment, south of Baghdad, of a centre for war-traumatized children. These are efforts aimed at providing relief for the weakest and most vulnerable members of Iraqi society.

In spite of renewed efforts by the international community to revive the Middle East peace process, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has again tragically deteriorated. But current setbacks must not stall the implementation of the road map. Austria continues to strongly support the role and the responsibility of the Quartet. The concept of two States remains the only viable solution. The promise of land for peace must be reactivated to create a basis of trust and respect on which to build. Terrorism destroys such hope.

I turn now to what the Secretary-General called soft threats. Here, his report coincides with the goals of my recently concluded presidency of the Human Security Network to strengthen the universal system by forging interregional consensus on issues pertaining to human security. That places the individual human being and his or her protection at the centre of our policies. As a concrete result of my presidency, the ministers of the Network adopted a manual on human rights education. That unique training tool, based on the universality of human rights, is designed for global use and adaptable to target groups. The Network also adopted a strategy for supporting children affected by armed conflict, along with a training curriculum for child rights experts and a compendium of the relevant international child protection standards — an effort in which we cooperated closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Olara Otunnu.

The Millennium Development Goals have become fundamental benchmarks in our efforts to achieve more inclusive and equitable globalization, and we — both developing and developed countries — need to strive for their implementation at the global, regional and national levels. In that context, as part of the partnership effort agreed to in Monterrey, I am happy to announce that Austrian official development assistance will be increased by 33 per cent in 2004.

The Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development recognized the importance of energy for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Austria welcomes the additional impetus created by the Renewables 2004 Conference. I am also glad that the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership will establish its secretariat in Vienna. Meanwhile, Austria will use the synergies created by these activities to continue its endeavours to build up the capacity of the Global Forum on Sustainable Energy, which I launched in 1999.

At this point, let me express Austria's disappointment that the Ministerial Meeting in Cancún could not sustain the momentum towards achieving acceptable solutions for fair trade. Such a setback must

not repeat itself, not least because trade is an engine for development. I support the notion that we also need to begin a reform of the decision-making process within the World Trade Organization. We must avoid a tendency towards ending multilateralism and towards relying exclusively on bilateralism or regionalism in trade.

This year, we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, which confirmed the universality, indivisibility and interrelatedness of human rights as well as the important nexus among human rights, democracy and development. Human rights disasters that we have witnessed since — such as those in Rwanda and Srebrenica — must not be allowed to recur. One essential step in that regard is the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which I signed this morning.

Human rights must protect in particular the weak, women and children. As a woman and as Foreign Minister of my country, I have always spoken out in favour of the rights of women and against the frequently terrible infringements of those rights, such as genital mutilation, the stoning of women and the enslaving and trading of women and girls on the sex markets. Those horrendous practices must stop. And there is reason for hope: today is a good day for women's rights. News has reached us that Ms. Armina Lawal was acquitted by the Nigerian court. I am very happy about that outcome. Let us remind ourselves that the all-important fight against terrorism must not entail a lessening of hard-fought-for human rights standards.

Over the years and under the guidance of the Secretary-General, Austria has placed great importance on a comprehensive dialogue of cultures and civilizations. This November, I will host a second media seminar on the topic of "Cultural diversity: the quest for common moral ground and the public role of the media", exploring how the free media can contribute to cultural understanding and respect. A seminal event in the context of that dialogue was the first-ever conference of European Islamic leaders in Austria, held in June of this year, which adopted a strongly worded declaration in support of tolerance.

How can we contribute to stability in the regions of the world? Europe has its own experience with creating a zone of stability and welfare. The signing of the European Union (EU) accession treaty with 10 new prospective members in April of this year is an important contribution to security on our continent. The strategy of EU is also geared towards exporting that peace dividend to new neighbours of the enlarged EU further to the east and to the south-east and in the Mediterranean region. Let me highlight one encouraging event from that region, which I was able to witness from a close vantage point when I visited Belgrade less than two weeks ago. I am talking about the important gesture of President Marović of Serbia and Montenegro and of President Mesić of Croatia, apologizing on behalf of those of their countries' citizens, who had committed acts of violence against one another in recent history.

The vision of global solidarity, collective security and a global culture of human rights are rooted in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I am grateful to the Secretary-General for his courage and leadership to engage us in an honest, future-oriented debate. The time to act is now. I can again assure the Secretary-General that Austria supports him in that important endeavour.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yoon Young-kwan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Yoon Young-kwan (Republic of Korea): I should like first of all to express my heartiest congratulations to Mr. Julian Hunte on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I have no doubt that, under his able stewardship, we will be able to achieve a great deal during this important session. I should also like to thank Mr. Jan Kavan for his dedication and hard work during the last session.

The past year has witnessed the fall of a decades-long dictatorship in Iraq. The Iraqi people have regained their freedom and are now embarking upon the arduous process of rebuilding their nation. However, the auspicious political changes brought on in Iraq will hold real meaning for the Iraqi people and the regional order only once they are able .o enjoy the social economic benefits of a broadly based functional democratic Government. To that end, the Republic of Korea is now playing its part in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The situation in today's Iraq is, however, less than promising. The recent surge of terror and chaos has served as a sobering reminder that winning the war does not necessarily mean winning peace.

As the terrorist attack against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad last month so vividly demonstrated, the prevalence of violence and terrorism poses the most pressing challenge that Iraq has to overcome in building a democratic, peaceful and prosperous nation. The Republic of Korea strongly condemns the atrocious act of terrorism against United Nations personnel who came to Iraq for the sole purpose of assisting the Iraqi people.

We recommend that the Secretary-General take the necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of the United Nations and its associated personnel, as well as international humanitarian workers in Iraq, as they carry out their noble duties.

Despite the persistence of conflict and turmoil, the international community has continued during the past year to make progress in strengthening the universal values of human rights and democracy. The spread of universal values in turn strengthens the foundation for peace and prosperity around the world.

However, a world in which all peoples enjoy their full rights and dignity is far from being a reality. We need to make concerted efforts to promote human dignity as the guiding precept of the world community.

The Republic of Korea remains firmly committed to international efforts to advance democracy around the world. In this vein, Seoul hosted the Second Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in November last year, as well as the Third Global Forum on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity in May this year. We will continue to actively participate in efforts to promote human rights, the rule of law and good governance.

The challenges facing us include fighting poverty and achieving sustainable development. Poverty undermines human dignity. It provides fertile ground for conflict and dictatorship. The need for international cooperation in this area has never been greater.

It is therefore tremendously important to achieve the goals set at last year's International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The international community must exercise collective wisdom to attain tangible results in working toward these goals.

In recent years, the growing number of people moving freely across borders has alerted us to the increasing threats to public health. As demonstrated by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome epidemic, infectious diseases have become a global issue from which no country is immune. It is timely and fitting that a high-level meeting was held earlier this week on the follow-up to the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS.

In our common fight against infectious diseases, I would like to call your attention to the International Vaccine Institute, which has been headquartered in Seoul since 1997. This unique international organization, devoted to the development of new vaccines needed in developing countries, awaits the support of the international community as it continues to expand its activities to promote public health for the less privileged of the world.

On the global security front, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and its potentially devastating linkage to terrorism loom as a grave and perilous threat. The global nuclear non-proliferation regime based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) currently faces unprecedented challenges.

How we deal with these challenges will have a decisive bearing on the future of not only the non-proliferation regime, but also the international security environment as a whole. Recent cases have proven that the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime has inherent limitations when it comes to dealing with determined proliferators.

While reiterating the importance of achieving the universality of the NPT and strengthening the safeguards system through universal adherence to the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreements of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), we underscore the need to close the loopholes in the current regime.

In this regard, we stress the vital role of bilateral, multilateral and regional approaches among countries sharing common security interests in the reinforcement and supplementing of the NPT. The role of export control arrangements among potential suppliers of relevant components and technologies for WMD is also crucial.

To that end, my Government hosted a plenary meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group last May and will also host a plenary meeting of the Missile Technology Control Regime next year.

We further believe that the nuclear-weapon States can do a great service to the cause of non-proliferation by complying with their share of the nuclear disarmament obligations under the NPT and by working harder to achieve the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The security of North-East Asia is currently threatened by the possibility of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear programme not only poses a direct challenge to the security of the Korean peninsula, but also endangers peace and stability in North-East Asia and beyond. The Republic of Korea is strongly committed to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and our position on the nuclear issue in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains clear and consistent.

First, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must dismantle its nuclear programme in a complete, irreversible and verifiable manner. Secondly, the nuclear issue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must be resolved in a peaceful and diplomatic manner.

The heightening of military tension on the Korean peninsula will be detrimental to all of the countries in the region. Fifty years after the end of the Korean War, our people still feel the pain. We must not allow such a tragedy ever to be repeated.

By opting to combine efforts to resolve this matter peacefully and diplomatically, the international community has shown great wisdom in dealing with this pressing and important matter. These efforts were culminated in the six-party talks held in Beijing last month.

Given the complexity of the issue, the multilateral talks were significant, in that all participants were able to reach consensus on certain principles that will guide their future discussions.

Among these principles my Government welcomes, in particular, the consensus on the necessity of both the de-nuclearization of the peninsula and a peaceful resolution through dialogue.

The tasks ahead will be to maintain the momentum of dialogue and to refine these agreed principles in greater detail. There will indeed be difficulties in bridging the differences at future talks. To overcome these obstacles a spirit of cooperation must prevail, and any action that may aggravate the situation must be avoided.

The success of the six-party talks would not only bring the resolution of the nuclear issue regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but should also lead to the process of creating a durable peace on the Korean peninsula.

More than 10 years after the end of the cold war, the peninsula remains the last theatre of the cold war, with 1.5 million heavily armed troops still pointing guns across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that separates the Republic of Korea in the south and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north. It is time for this 50-year stand-off to give way to reconciliation and cooperation. This process should be cautiously managed and occur peacefully and gradually.

In this regard, I would like to draw on lessons from the history of Europe that could be helpful in defining the future of inter-Korean relations. As we all know, in the century leading up to the Second World War, relations between France and Germany were characterized by the hostilities and confrontation of three major wars.

After the Second World War, however, the countries of Europe joined forces to help the two rivals settle their differences and to pursue peace and common prosperity through a network of economic interdependence.

Thanks to the vision of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, the European Coal and Steel Community came into being and has since developed and expanded to become the unprecedented, multilateral institution of integration known today as the European Union.

To be sure, the case of the Korean Peninsula is different from that of Europe. Nevertheless, as in the case of Europe, I believe that a resolution to the political conflict between the two sides of Korea could be facilitated by economic interdependence.

President Roh Moo-hyun's policy toward the North, aptly termed the policy for peace and prosperity, is directly aimed at resolving the political confrontation between the South and North through the deepening of

inter-Korean economic interdependence and with the cooperation of the international community.

However, the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has emerged as the most serious challenge to the process of consolidating peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. We in the Republic of Korea sincerely hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will realize that it simply cannot achieve economic prosperity without fully abandoning its intentions to develop nuclear weapons.

We note that all participants at the Beijing six-party talks acknowledged the need to address the security concerns of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and we ask the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to make a wise and far-reaching decision in this regard. We strongly hope that the security concerns of the North, along with the nuclear issue, will be dealt with in more detail at the next six-party talks.

Once the Democratic People's Republic of Korea abandons its nuclear weapon programme and seizes the opportunity offered by the six-party talks to embark on a path towards peace and prosperity, my Government will take further steps towards bold inter-Korean economic cooperation.

The international community will also provide necessary humanitarian and economic assistance. The positive impact of such cooperation and assistance will resound not only on the Peninsula but throughout the region and beyond.

In conclusion, the abandonment by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its nuclear programme through the six-party talks and the subsequent start of the peace process on the Korean Peninsula will present an unprecedented opportunity to dramatically enhance international relations in East Asia.

In this regard, we look forward to the support of all Member States of the United Nations for the success of the six-party talks and the establishment of a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The United Nations has much work to do in the twenty-first century. The global body is our greatest hope in our common efforts to make the world safer and more prosperous, for us and for future generations. I sincerely hope to see the United Nations renew itself and achieve its goals through continuous reform that will make it more effective and democratic. The Republic of Korea pledges its abiding support to the work of the United Nations in its noble mission for mankind as a whole.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

A number of representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): In his address before the Assembly yesterday, the President of Pakistan offered an action plan for peace between Pakistan and India. He invited India to open a dialogue with Pakistan. He offered a reciprocal ceasefire along the Line of Control in Kashmir. He offered to encourage a ceasefire within Indian-occupied Kashmir. He offered enhanced monitoring of the Line of Control on both sides in Kashmir, and he proposed the maintenance of an arms balance, both in conventional and non-conventional sectors, between India and Pakistan.

The response that we heard today from the distinguished Prime Minister of India was sadly disappointing — disappointing for Pakistan and, I am sure, disappointing for the international community. By this negative response, we have lost another opportunity to build peace in South Asia.

Instead, Pakistan's offer of help to promote a cessation of hostilities within Indian-occupied Kashmir was sadly misconstrued and misinterpreted by the distinguished Prime Minister of India as an admission of guilt. This is preposterous.

The Kashmiri struggle is between India and the Kashmiri people. Eighty thousand Kashmiris have been killed in Kashmir with impunity by 700,000 Indian occupation forces. These Kashmiris are buried in the graveyards of Kashmir, not in Pakistan. India wants the killing to continue, because it believes that even now, after 12 years of failed suppression, that it can intimidate the Kashmiris into giving up their struggle for liberty. India, like all other colonial oppressors of the past, is surely mistaken. Kashmir will be free one day.

The dialogue that Pakistan has proposed to India is one of peace. It is not a favour to Pakistan. It is the only mechanism envisaged by our Charter to promote the easing of tension and the resolution of conflict.

Sadly, the Indian Prime Minister rejected this reasonable offer for peace. This reflects the negative stance of the ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in India. The purpose of the so-called hard line in New Delhi is not to deal with cross-border terrorism. It is designed to yield electoral gains for the Indian ruling party in forthcoming State elections.

The BJP's political strategy was born of its victory in the recent elections in Gujarat, where it gained popularity after the State-managed massacre of 2000 innocent Muslims. Thus is democracy being converted in the service of genocide. This is how great principles are perverted when fascists assume power. The BJP's fascist doctrine propounded by the likes of Gowalkar is well known. This is a party of which one of the members assassinated Ghandi. It is the party that destroyed the Babri mosque, a great citadel of the Muslim culture of India. Five members were convicted the other day of this crime, although the deputy leader of the party was let off. At recent electoral rallies, the BJP has threatened to destroy 3000 other mosques across India. A leader of the fascist group Shiv Sena, Mr. Bal Thackeray, recently called for the formation of groups to commit terrorist acts against Pakistan and the Muslims of India. He is still running free.

Prime Minister Vajpayee has accused Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism in Kashmir. The Kashmiri struggle for self-determination seeks to realize the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council calling on India to hold a plebiscite to enable the Kashmiri people to determine their own destiny. The Security Council has said that elections held under Indian occupation, even if they were ever to be fair, would not be a substitute for the plebiscite under United Nations auspices. No election in Kashmir has ever been free or fair.

In accordance with United Nations decisions, although India continues to brutally suppress the Kashmiri freedom struggle, the Kashmiris have a legitimate right to resist Indian occupation by all means at their disposal. This struggle cannot be denigrated or described as terrorist. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations has recently observed,

> "Internationally, we are seeing an increasing use of what I call the 'T-word' — terrorism — to demonize political opponents ... We are seeing too many cases where States living in tension with their neighbours make opportunistic use of the fight against terrorism to threaten or justify new military action on long-running disputes.
>
> "Similarly, States fighting various forms of unrest or insurgency are finding it tempting to abandon the slow, difficult, but sometimes necessary processes of political negotiation for the deceptively easy option of military action." (S/PV.4688, p. 3).

One can grant that India knows a lot about terrorism. It is, to use a popular saying, the mother of terrorism. It has sponsored terrorism against each one of its neighbours. Read the book entitled "*Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of India's Intelligence Agencies*," by Rohan Gunaratna. He says that more than 20,000 Tamil militants were based in India during the 80s; the first and second batch of training was provided by the Indian foreign intelligence agency in Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh at two Indian military facilities. After that, they set up their own training camps in southern India. Let us remember that the first suicide bombers came from this batch trained by India. The author writes,

> "In Bangladesh, in the Chittagong hills, in the late 80s I met rebels who told me they had been instructed in both weaponry and psy-ops, the term used by India, at a camp near Dehradun, in the Himalayan foothills."

A decade and a half earlier, India had trained other rebels. In Kashmir, India has trained renegade Kashmiris and sent them across the border into Pakistan to commit terrorist acts. There are also well-documented reports that Indian agencies have sponsored and directed renegade groups of Kashmiris to perpetrate terrorist acts within Indian-occupied Kashmir as a means of intimidating the Kashmiris and defaming the Kashmiri freedom struggle. This has been recorded by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and other organizations.

The Indian Prime Minister spoke of Pakistan seeking military parity. We do not; we seek military balance. We are entitled to equal security and we urge India's military suppliers not to spark another arms race in the sub-continent.

It is our hope that, despite Prime Minister Vajpayee's statement today, cooler heads — if there are any in New Delhi — will reflect and will come to the conclusion that dialogue is the only answer to the problems between India and Pakistan and that they will respond positively to the offer made by the President of Pakistan yesterday.

Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Palestine): The statement made today by the representative of Israel was replete with distortions and fabrications. Moreover, it conveyed Israel's consistent and blatant contempt for the international community as represented in this world body, including in this Assembly. The judgement of the overwhelming majority of Member States upholding international law and international humanitarian law has once again been treated with disdain.

Instead of Israel changing its course and complying with international law, the international community was told today that it must change its ways when it comes to upholding the law with regard to the question of Palestine. With such arrogance and such contempt for even the most fundamental tenets of international law, including the United Nations Charter, Israel has continued to act with impunity as it continues to carry out its more than 36-year military colonial occupation of the Palestinian land and the Palestinian people.

It is the Israeli Government that has brought diplomatic efforts to a standstill and that is the real obstacle to peace and stability. Indeed, they vilify and threaten out leader and elected President because they do not want a peace settlement, and not vice-versa. In fact, the Israeli Prime Minister, his Defence Minister and his Army Chief of Staff are, as is well known, responsible for countless war crimes committed against the Palestinian people. The Prime Minister himself has been deeply implicated in massacres against the Palestinian people. This is a Government full of extreme right-wingers, many espousing racist ideologies and propagating incitement and intolerance, with some even calling, publicly, for the expulsion or transfer of the entire Palestinian population from the occupied territory.

It is the most right-wing Government in Israel's short history. Yet somehow we are asked to believe that this is a Government that actually wants peace, when in fact all of its actions are to the contrary. The same Government that delivers flowery speeches about peace and beating swords into ploughshares continues to relentlessly use its warplanes, helicopter gunships, tanks and bulldozers against the Palestinian people, even today killing more civilians, including a 3-year-old girl in Gaza. Moreover, we should recall that it is the Israeli occupation that is the root cause of all the ills we face today, including condemnable acts of terror.

The time limit prevents me from exploring in detail all of the Israeli violations against the Palestinian people or calculating what the proportional impact of the number of deaths caused by the widespread destruction inflicted on the Palestinian people by the occupying Power would be in comparison with other countries, which the Israeli representative neglected to calculate. Suffice it to say that there is no instrument of international law or noble legal principle that Israel has not grossly violated, in terms of both its policies and its actions as a State and as an occupying Power. These include the acquisition of territory by war; colonial policies and actions; the forcible transfer of people to occupied territory; systematic human rights violations, including wilful killings; State terrorism; collective punishment; discrimination against minorities; the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction; the violation of the sovereignty of many other States, including through military attacks and assassinations; money-laundering; trafficking in human persons and in small arms and light weapons; and the violation of the basic and inalienable human right to self-determination.

Thus the picture before us is bleak. Today, however, there was a glimmer of hope. It was reported that 27 Israeli air force pilots had submitted a letter to their commander refusing to carry out air strikes in Palestinian areas because such air strikes are "illegal and immoral" and condemning the continuing Israeli occupation. They — along with the army officers who have refused to serve in the occupied Palestinian territory and the many other Israelis who truly work for peace — represent a voice of conscience, and their principled stance gives us renewed hope in the possibility of actually achieving peace between the two peoples, regardless of the current Government's positions and actions.

Mr. Amirbayov (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan regrets that this rostrum has again been abused by Armenia in order to disseminate false information designed to gain justification for its immoral and repugnant State policy

of gross violations of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

Armenia continues to challenge the international community and the Assembly by continuing its illegal occupation of Nagorny Karabakh and seven adjacent regions of Azerbaijan. It continues to ignore the will of the international community, reflected in the four resolutions of the Security Council unequivocally demanding Armenia's immediate, unconditional and complete withdrawal from occupied territories. Today, when we all speak of the need to make the Organization a better and more efficient tool in preserving international peace and security, we must think seriously about how to make sure that aggressor States like Armenia are brought to justice.

The Armenian Minister engaged in entertaining the audience with poorly concocted myths regarding my country. I will not take much of the Assembly's time by exploring the whole anthology of Armenian myths; rather, I will mention only a few.

The first myth is that Nagorny Karabakh has reached its long-time dream of becoming an independent State. Everyone sitting in this Hall who knows a bit of the history of the Caucasus will agree that Nagorny Karabakh has never been, and never will be, either independent or affiliated with Armenia; it has always been, and will continue to be, an integral part of Azerbaijan, and it has always been the heart of Azerbaijan's culture, science, art and political life.

The second myth concerns the so-called blockade to which poor, long-suffering Armenia was subjected by its neighbours. Can we speak of a blockade when a country has access to several States in the outside world and cannot enjoy normal economic relations with one State whose territories it has occupied and whose population it has brutally murdered since 1987? I shall not enumerate all those massacres; it will suffice to mention the Khojaly massacre of 1992, in which 1,000 innocent civilians were massacred by Armenian aggressors. And was it not the Azerbaijani territory of Nakhchivan that was subjected to a blockade by Armenia only because it is populated by Azerbaijanis?

The third myth involves the so-called Key West arrangement referred to by Minister Oskanian. Indeed, the population of that small, quiet town should be very thankful to Armenia for such a great advertisement, which included amateurish political vocabulary. What the representative of Armenia described as a breakthrough is nothing other than Azerbaijan's genuine desire to pursue the negotiations that have been ongoing for more than 10 years, which should produce a solution based on the norms and principles of international law.

The next myth is that Armenia has won the war and has annexed Nagorny Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territories, and that it will happily live with the status quo for as long as it wishes. From this rostrum, I assure the Assembly that Azerbaijan will spare no effort to restore justice and its sovereignty within the borders recognized by the international community. Not one inch of our land will be yielded to the aggressor. I appreciate the fact that Armenia realizes that fact very well. The special attention that the Minister devoted to that aspect in his statement proves that the aggressor is indeed concerned about the evolving situation and about prospects in the not-too-distant future. If anything, by occupying Azerbaijani territories, Armenia has gained a deep sense of apprehension and fear that it has bitten off more than it can chew.

As for the money from the oil revenues that are allegedly being used for weapons, the Government of Azerbaijan, thanks to the neighbour that we are so unfortunate as to have, is forced to spend huge amounts of money — most recently, $70 million — to alleviate the sufferings of nearly a million refugees and internally displaced persons driven from their homes by Armenia aggressors. Yesterday, Prime Minister Aliyev pointed that out clearly in his address.

In conclusion, let me, through the presidency, appeal to the self-proclaimed Caucasian tiger to come down to earth and realize that it is in its own interests to forget the myths, to open its eyes and to abide by the spirit and the letter of the founding document of this House, the Charter of the United Nations. We are not in a jungle, after all.

Mr. Hong Je-ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, which referred specifically to the nuclear issue. In order to help the Members present here to gain a correct understanding of this issue, I should like to submit the following.

The nuclear issue is, in essence, an outcome of the hostile policy of the United States to isolate and stifle the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea politically, economically and militarily. The issue originated from the deep-rooted hostility of the United States, which denies our system and refuses to coexist peacefully with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was initiated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is thus the ultimate goal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the earnest desire of the entire Korean nation. In that context, at the three-party talks, and at the six-party talks that followed, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea put forward realistic and reasonable proposals for attaining the goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.

The proposal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea contained a detailed account of a package deal and an order for simultaneous actions aimed at the comprehensive and fair solution of the nuclear issue, including a change in the United States' hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the conclusion of a non-aggression treaty between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, the renunciation of the nuclear programme and the normalization of bilateral relations. Simultaneous action is a realistic means of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, and any objection to it is tantamount to a refusal.

The United States, however, repeatedly called for the renunciation first by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its nuclear programme, without any reference to a change in its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is the key to the settlement of the nuclear issue.

The United States acted imprudently, even asserting that a non-aggression treaty was not necessary. It also said that it was not interested in such a treaty. We have already made it clear that we would abandon our nuclear programme if the United States clearly indicated its intention to peacefully coexist with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by concluding a non-aggression treaty and proved, in practice, that it had changed its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains consistent in its position with regard to the resolution of the nuclear issue peacefully, through dialogue and negotiation.

As Members are well aware, through the 15 June North-South Joint Declaration, North and South Korea pledged themselves to promoting national reconciliation and the process of reunification by the Korean people themselves. I wish to base myself on that joint statement in appealing to the South Korean authorities to cooperate with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, their fellow countrymen, and to refrain from following the foreign force. If South Korea sincerely wants a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue, as well as national reconciliation and reunification, it would be well advised to urge the United States to give up its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to respond positively to the proposal set out by our side aimed at a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue.

Mr. Shringla (India): Each year in this forum Pakistan exposes the limitations of its ability to conduct itself in a responsible and forward-looking manner. We regard the General Assembly as a forum for offering views, not for resorting to abuse. Pakistan continues to be the epicentre of terrorism, despite its protestations, which come easily to a country whose foreign policy has relied traditionally on camouflage and double-speak. The international community is beginning to discover and acknowledge this, given the resurgence of Taliban activity in Afghanistan. Pakistan has been making desperate efforts to create political fiction about its anti-terrorist credentials. That is not surprising for a country whose history and policies have been rooted in political fiction. In our experience, Pakistan's combat against international terrorism is based upon 1 per cent intention and 99 per cent pretension. That ratio needs to be reversed if Pakistan expects us to take its commitment to end cross-border terrorism against India seriously.

We would like to remind Pakistan that it cannot hope to pursue the goal of enlightened moderation without demonstrating some sign of moderate enlightenment while dealing with serious issues of peace and stability. As we do not wish to reciprocate Pakistan's diplomacy of abuse and hate, we will not take further issue with the egregious comments of the representative of Pakistan.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan for five minutes.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): The Permanent Representative of Pakistan, in his first intervention in

exercise of the right of reply, has already dilated on Pakistan's position. I would merely like to add a few more points which are pertinent to this discussion.

Over the past several years, India has been pursuing a sophisticated strategy of portraying itself as a victim of foreign-sponsored terrorism. However, these claims have never been substantiated. India has refused to heed calls for an impartial judicial inquiry into these incidents, and the inquiries that have been held indicate that the terrorist incidents are part of a well-considered and systematic plan crafted by the Indian intelligence agencies.

I would like to refer to an independent inquiry carried out by two Indian non-governmental organizations — the Punjab Human Rights Organization and the Movement Against State Repression — which concluded, in March 2000, that the Chattisinghpora massacre was conducted by renegade elements in the pay of Indian agencies.

The 1999 Human Rights Watch report, "Behind the Kashmir Conflict", states that since at least early 1995, Indian security forces have armed and trained local auxiliary forces made up of surrendered or captured militants to assist in counter-insurgency operations. These groups participate in joint patrols, receive and carry out orders given by security forces and operate in full view of army and security force bunkers and camps. Many of these groups have been responsible for grave human rights abuses, including summary executions, disappearances, torture and illegal detention. Amnesty International, in its 1999 report, said:

> "Renegades, while usually acting in conjunction with any of these agencies, are also reported to have actively taken people into their custody and 'disappeared' them."

During the past three years, Indian-sponsored agents and the Indian intelligence agency, RAW, have perpetrated 170 incidents of terrorism in Pakistan, which resulted in the deaths of 176 persons and in injuries to 554. Since the year 2000, 279 Indian agents have been apprehended in Pakistan, and so far 57 training camps — reception centres — in India have been confirmed and identified by apprehended terrorists, mostly in Indian-occupied Kashmir, Rajastan and Gujarat.

State terrorism is the worst form of terrorism. I hope that the spirit in which the President of Pakistan made an offer of dialogue and reconciliation to India will be reciprocated and taken in the spirit of earnestness in which it was made.

The meeting rose at 7.55 p.m.